

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET – 3 MAY 2016

Title of report	SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME (SVPRS) AND ASYLUM SEEKER DISPERSAL AREA (ASDA)						
Key Decision	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>a)</td> <td>Financial</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b)</td> <td>Community</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> </table>	a)	Financial	No	b)	Community	Yes
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b)	Community	Yes					
Contacts	<p>Councillor Roger Bayliss 01530 411055 roger.bayliss@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>Director of Housing 01530 454819 glyn.jones@nwleicestershire.gov.uk</p>						
Purpose of report	<p>To seek Cabinet approval to host 2 Syrian refugee families per year for the remaining duration of the current Syrian refugee resettlement programme (4 years), to be rehoused in the first instance if possible, in private rented sector accommodation in the district. Also to endorse the Countywide position of Districts and Rutland regarding the Asylum Seeker Dispersal Area, not to make an offer to support the re-settlement of any asylum seekers at this point in time.</p>						
Reason for Decision	<p>To contribute to the national response to the Government’s decision to provide rehousing for 20,000 Syrian refugees over the 5 years of the current parliament.</p>						
Council Priorities	<p>Value for Money Business and Jobs Homes and Communities</p>						
<p>Implications:</p> <p>Financial/Staff</p> <p>Link to relevant CAT</p> <p>Risk Management</p>	<p>Costs to be met from within existing approved budgets and grant funding from the Home Office as detailed in Appendix 1.</p> <p>Welfare Reform CAT is coordinating our response to the refugee/asylum resettlement situation and linking to the Leicestershire Resilience Forum (LRF).</p> <p>Risks will be managed through the corporate performance management framework</p>						

Equalities Impact Screening	The refugees being re-settled are likely to be a vulnerable client group, and will require support, especially in terms of learning English and matching their skills to employment opportunities. The Council will have a key role to play in supporting the integration of refugees into local communities and promoting positive community relations.
Human Rights	No implications
Transformational Government	N/A
Comments of Head of Paid Service	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Deputy Section 151 Officer	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Deputy Monitoring Officer	Report is satisfactory
Consultees	Corporate Leadership Team; Housing Senior Management Team.
Background papers	None
Recommendations	<p>IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT CABINET</p> <p>A. APPROVE THE PROPOSAL THAT WE AGREE TO HOST 2 FAMILIES PER YEAR FOR 4 YEARS UNDER THE SYRIAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME AS PART OF A WIDER RESPONSE FROM LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICTS</p> <p>B. AGREE TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSED POSITION OF ALL DISTRICTS (BAR ONE) NOT TO OFFER TO BECOME AN ASYLUM DISPERSAL AREA.</p>

1 CONTEXT/BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Local Authorities across the County have been encouraged by the Home Office to consider taking part in two separate schemes to resettle Asylum Seekers and/or Syrian Refugees into their communities.
- 1.2 The two schemes are distinctly different in terms of the role the Local Authority has to play, and the financial support available. In summary the key aspects of the two schemes are -

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS)

- Local Authorities are to coordinate support for family/individuals – can be directly provided or contracted from voluntary sector.
- Local Authorities are required to source accommodation which is normally private rented.
- Government funding is available over the 5 year period to fund support provision with separate funding for Education and Health also paid directly to providing agencies as detailed in Appendix 1.
- The scheme is targeting the re-housing of 20,000 refugees over 5 years. 1000 have so far been rehoused in Phase 1, and Phase 2 is to commence post April 2016.
- Working age Refugees have a work visa and can claim benefits.
- “Statement of Requirements” from the Home Office for participation in the scheme is attached as Appendix 2.
- An action plan developed by a neighbouring local authority involved in Phase 1 will be used as a template to coordinate the delivery of the scheme at a local level.
- Several detailed layers of screening of the refugees being considered for the scheme takes place in the camps before families are accepted onto the scheme.
- Phase 1 of the scheme was completed over Christmas 2015, and the learning from those Councils taking part is summarised in Appendix 3.

Asylum Seeker Dispersal Area (ASDA).

- The Local Authority expresses an interest in becoming an Asylum Seeker Dispersal Area.
- Local Police/Education/Health involvement is critical to successful project.
- Government have appointed a number of agencies across the Country to provide accommodation and support, with G4S covering the East Midlands. There is no direct Local Authority involvement in this process.
- In districts offering to take part in the scheme, G4S identify areas where they can obtain sufficient private rented accommodation at appropriate rent levels to make a location viable to them.
- Locations and individual properties are then proposed, to be approved by Local Authority/Police prior to commissioning.
- Asylum Seekers cannot claim benefits or work until their applications are determined.

- Asylum applications typically take up to 6 months to be processed, but can be much quicker depending on the individuals circumstances.
 - Typically far more individuals than families are rehoused through this scheme.
 - No Government funding is available for support services, other than that provided by G4S as part of their housing and support contract.
- 1.3 Participation in both schemes is currently on a voluntary basis, although there have been suggestions that unless sufficient Councils come forward to take part, the Home Office may consider compulsion for the Asylum Seeker programme. Government officials have confirmed that the two schemes are not linked, in terms of agreeing to be part of one scheme reducing the need to contribute to the other.
- 1.4 Discussions have been underway at several levels between officers from District Councils across Leicestershire with a view to establishing a political and officer level consensus to a shared way forward. This has involved meetings at a strategic level under the umbrella of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) attended by the Director of Housing, and tactical level discussions in a sub Group of County Chief Housing Officers (CHOG) attended by the Head of Housing.
- 1.5 The outcome from these meetings has been that most Districts are proposing to take a number of Syrian Refugees per annum. As a County (bar one authority), we are not currently proposing to offer to support the Asylum Seeker Dispersal Area programme. The reason for not offering to take part in the ASDA scheme is that a significant number of asylum seekers have already been rehoused in the East Midlands, and there are other sub regions that have not yet taken any substantive numbers.
- 1.6 Having carefully considered the implications of rehousing Syrian Refugees, it is recommended that we offer to accept 2 family units per year. The size of these families will clearly be a matter for the Government agencies to determine, and we will need to source appropriate accommodation once we are made aware of this.

2 DELIVERY OF THE PROJECT

- 2.1 If our proposal is accepted we will deliver the SVPRS requirements through a project management process and structure. Utilising the existing Welfare Reform Corporate Action Team as the Project Board, a sub group will be formed with key internal and external partner agencies to establish the required contacts and protocols at a local level.
- 2.2 As it is likely that a number of Councils in Leicestershire will be taking part in this scheme it is proposed that a joint approach be taken to the procurement of support and welfare services, utilising contacts within the Leicester City Council area, where there is more experience of rehousing asylum seekers and refugees over an extended time period. Buying in this capacity and skills is considered to be far more cost effective than establishing our own skills base given the proposed numbers of people to be rehoused. At a Countywide level the sub group of Chief Housing Officers Group formed to oversee this process will meet to coordinate any procurement/support related activities, and share

learning. Discussions are ongoing about the possibility of appointing a Support Coordinator to work across the participating districts.

- 2.3 The Council will liaise with partner agencies in identifying suitable areas where the refugees may be resettled, and will have a key role to play in supporting the integration of refugees into local communities and promoting positive community relations. Existing support groups for refugees in Leicester have indicated they will be able to work on a county wide basis, and the Council will coordinate other support activities to harness input from local people who wish to support the new arrivals.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There will inevitably be some indirect cost implication for the Council in supporting the SVPRS, but a majority of the costs are envisaged as being funded from the Government Grant identified in Appendix 1. In practical terms, one of the District Councils, most likely Charnwood, will be required to act as the “administering authority” for Government grant purposes, and will then distribute funding to the participating Councils.
- 3.2 As there is no proposal to become an ASDA there are no cost implications.

Breakdown of local authority funding for Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme

Year 1 funding

Year 1 funding is available from the Overseas Development Aid budget to fund costs of Syrian refugees on a per person tariff basis. **The year 1 tariff is £8,520 for direct local authority costs.**

There is also additional support for educational and medical needs. In addition, the refugee will be able to access welfare benefit payments (subject to the statutory limit) and other public services.

Year 2-5 funding

Year 2-5 funding for costs borne by a local authority are also calculated on a per person tariff. It will be paid to local authorities as an un-ring fenced grant to assist with costs incurred supporting refugees. It will be for the local authority to determine the best use of the funds to support the placements in their area. The type of services it will fund can include for example, integration support such as additional English language training and social care.

Existing funding mechanism will be used to providing funding for schools and health services required by placements.

Funding is broken down as follows:

Year 2 tariff is £5,000

Year 3 tariff is £3,700

Year 4 tariff is £2,300

Year 5 tariff is £1,000

The extreme cases fund is worth 15% of the overall tariff costs each year. Across 2016/17 to 2019/20 we estimate that the extreme cases fund will be worth £16.5m

Payment mechanism

We will work with local authorities to agree payment mechanisms as well as details on how the extreme cases fund will be determined.