

CABINET MEMBERS DELEGATED DECISION

Open		Would any decisions proposed :		
Any especially affected Wards None	Discretionary	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide	YES	
		Need to be recommendations to Council	NO	
		Is it a Key Decision	NO	
Lead Member: Cllr Adrian Lawrence E-mail: cllr.adrian.lawrence@west-norfolk.gov.uk ,		Other Cabinet Members consulted: Cllr Brian Long		
		Other Members consulted:		
Lead Officer: Duncan Hall E-mail: Duncan.hall@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial:		Other Officers consulted: Lorraine Gore		
Financial Implications YES	Policy/Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications YES	Equal Impact Assessment YES : Pre-screening attached	Risk Management Implications NO
Date meeting advertised: 18 th September 2017		Date of meeting decision to be taken: 25 th September 2017		
Deadline for Call-In: 2 nd October 2017				

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE NORFOLK SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSON RE-SETTLEMENT SCHEME

Summary

This report deals with a decision to make an equal contribution – along with all of the district councils in Norfolk to help meet a shortfall in housing related costs associated with the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

Recommendation

For the Borough Council, in line with other Norfolk council's to make a contribution of up to £4,400 pa for seven years (the duration of the scheme) capped at total £30,800.

Reason for Decision

The scheme initially proposed for Norfolk in 2015 is now being implemented where 12 families have/ or are due to be re-settled, this year. In July 2016 councils across Norfolk indicated their intention to help meet any shortfall in housing related costs .

Background

In September 2015 it was agreed that Norfolk County Council would take the lead on a county wide response to the national 'Syrian Vulnerable persons Resettlement scheme' (VPR) - a voluntary scheme. This followed a commitment by the then PM in relation to the Syrian refugee crisis. Representatives from a range of relevant services across the public sector formed a task group to prepare some proposals to submit to the Home Office.

BCKLWN participated in the work of this group in relation to the accommodation aspects of the proposals.

A proposed approach was devised and published in a Norfolk County Council document titled 'Syrian Vulnerable Person's Refugee (VPR) Scheme for Norfolk'. The proposal sets out arrangements to re-settle approximately 50 refugees (12-15 families). Assumptions were made with regard to the need for education, specialist health and support services, with cost estimates included. It was agreed that the 12 -15 families should ideally be located in the same community rather than be separated across the county. For many reasons including: access to worship opportunities (Sunni and Shia mosques); access to social integration initiatives; voluntary and community support; and employment opportunities - Norwich was deemed to be the most appropriate location. Norwich has an existing large Arabic speaking community.

The Home Office accepted the proposals and made a basic funding offer of £20,520 per refugee, or £1,026,000 for 50 individuals – assumed over 7 year period. This left a predicted potential shortfall of £401,659 on the Norfolk schemes estimated costs. In addition the Government funding offer explicitly excludes any rent payments for accommodation not covered by Housing Benefit. The Norfolk scheme is based on using Private Rented Sector (PRS) accommodation – the costs of which will exceed Housing Benefit limits (Local Housing Allowance rates). There is therefore a shortfall in relation to housing costs associated with the scheme in Norfolk of **£216,000**.

After a meeting of the Norfolk County Council's Policy and Resources Committee on the 31st May, officers coordinating the Norfolk VPR proposals contacted district councils to seek views in relation to each council making a funding contribution to cover the £216,000 shortfall. In principle district councils across the county were in support of making a contribution towards the shortfall, equating to a maximum of £4,400 per annum for 7 years (total capped at £30,800). The matter was discussed during an informal briefing meeting with Cabinet members on 20th July 2016, at which time members were supportive to this approach

Attached is a position statement produced by Norfolk County Council in July 2017. 5 Syrian families arrived in Norwich earlier this year, and a further 7 families are due to arrive before the end of the year. The statement suggests that to date the scheme has been successful, and that the support from the public in the form of volunteering and donations has surpassed expectations.

Costs have now been incurred in relation to the identified shortfall. It is proposed that these will be collected quarterly.

Options Considered

An alternative option is not to make a contribution to the scheme. This would mean an alternative source of funding would need to be identified to meet the housing related costs of the scheme.

Policy Implications

There are no policy implications for this Council

Financial Implications

This one off cost can be met from Housing Options reserve ER762

Personnel Implications

There are no policy or personnel implications

Statutory Considerations

There are no statutory obligations - the scheme is voluntary.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(Pre screening report template attached)

Risk Management Implications

There are no risk implications

Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

None

Background Papers

Norfolk County Council - Partner Briefing – position statement below

Partner briefing

Re: Latest position - Norfolk's Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme

Date: July 2017

Summary

1. Members of Norfolk County Council voted in July 2016 to accept 50 vulnerable Syrian refugees into the county through the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme.
2. Norfolk County Council is the lead agency for the scheme, working closely with other partners and voluntary agencies. Norwich City Council is the lead agency for providing housing.
3. The first five Syrian families arrived in Norwich in February this year, and over the next couple of months the final seven families will begin their new life in Norfolk.
4. This note below provides an update on the latest position.

Background

5. The Government's Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme gives priority to survivors of torture and violence, women and children at risk and

those in medical need. Families are selected from refugee camps around Syria - the scheme does not accept people who have journeyed to Europe.

Latest position in Norfolk

6. The five Syrian families who arrived in Norwich in February all had very young children, so their priorities were to quietly settle their children into their new homes introduce calm and stability after life in the camps and develop their English language skills as quickly as possible. The families are all settling in well and the children are doing well in their pre-schools and schools.

7. Norfolk's resettlement programme has been praised by the Home Office for the huge numbers of local volunteers it has successfully recruited to support and befriend the families. In total, over 100 volunteers have been involved, which has not only minimised costs, but has also enabled the families to make new friends and gain emotional support as they rebuild their lives in Norfolk.

8. Key components of the scheme have included an induction programme, attending to the families' health needs, helping them access local services, and an intensive programme of English lessons for all the adults.

Next steps

9. The final seven families are due to arrive in Norfolk over the next couple of months. As with the first cohort, families will live in the Norwich area, in accommodation rented from the private sector.

10. In February this year, public agencies in Norfolk were inundated by an incredible community response from residents and local faith and voluntary groups, who offered their help to resettle the refugee families. This included offers of housing, help with English language tuition, interpretation, employment opportunities, emotional support and donations of furniture, bedding, household items and toys.

11. In addition, many residents made financial donations to a refugee fund coordinated by the Church of England Norwich Diocese. At the time of writing this briefing, the fund has raised £43,626. More information about the fund is available here: www.dioceseofnorwich.org/churches/society/refugees

12. A further press appeal to the public will be launched by Norfolk County Council shortly, to ask for continued assistance with some basic items, including toys, books and furniture.

Other information

13. The refugee families have expressed their gratitude to the press and local services for respecting their wishes to ensure that their young children have a quiet arrival in Norfolk, to help them settle into their new lives as quickly and safely as possible.

Offers of help

14. If members of the public would like to register an offer of help, they should use the Government's digital register, below. The register explains what items of equipment or offers are needed, to avoid people donating items that are already in good supply.

www.gov.uk/help-refugees.

Further information

15. Please contact Jo Richardson, Equality & Diversity Manager, Norfolk County Council, and Tel: 01603 223816, or email jo.richardson@norfolk.gov.uk



Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

Name of policy/service/function	Contribution to Syrian Vulnerable Person Re-settlement Scheme				
Is this a new or existing policy/ service/function?	New				
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service rigidly constrained by statutory obligations	To support a county wide scheme to support 12 refugee families from the Syrian crisis				
Question	Answer				
1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups according to their different protected characteristic, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service? Please tick the relevant box for each group. NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age		✓		
	Disability		✓		
	Gender		✓		
	Gender Re-assignment		✓		
	Marriage/civil partnership		✓		
	Pregnancy & maternity		✓		
	Race		✓		
	Religion or belief		✓		
	Sexual orientation		✓		
	Other (eg low income)		✓		
	Question	Answer	Comments		
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	No				
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No				
4. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	Yes				
5. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section	N/A	Actions:			
		Actions agreed by EWG member:			
Assessment completed by: Name DUNCAN HALL					
Job title Housing Services Manager	Date 12 September 2017				

