



CABINET: 10 January 2017

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**Report of: Director of Leisure and Wellbeing**

**Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Kevin Wright**

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**SUBJECT: SYRIAN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME**

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Wards affected: Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To provide Members with details of the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP), the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) and the pledge to resettle refugees in West Lancashire.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Director of Leisure and Wellbeing be authorised to resettle 5 refugee households with a suggested arrival date of July 2017.
- 2.2 In order to fulfil the authorisation in 2.1, the Director of Leisure and Wellbeing, in conjunction with the relevant Portfolio Holder and Lancashire County Council, be authorised to commission a third sector organisation to provide the required integration support whilst retaining the task of sourcing and securing suitable accommodation.
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## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In 2015, the UK Government agreed to resettle up to 20,000 refugees during the current Parliament (i.e. over 5 years from 2015-2020). The existing Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme and its criteria was expanded and re-named the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP).
- 3.2 Under the SRP, individuals are assessed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) whilst in the refugee camps. The criteria for selecting individuals for resettlement are:
- Women and girls at risk.

- Survivors of violence and/or torture.
  - Refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs.
  - Refugees with medical needs or disabilities.
  - Children and adolescents at risk.
  - Persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.
  - Refugees with family links in resettlement countries.
- 3.3 Refugees also undergo health and security screening, additional vetting by the UK and some cultural orientation.
- 3.4 Syrians resettled under the scheme are granted a 5 year humanitarian protection visa during which time they are entitled to work, reunite with family, claim certain income related benefits and apply for social housing. After 5 years, the resettled refugees can choose to return to Syria or apply for permanent settlement in the UK.
- 3.5 Any local authority participating in the scheme must be able to provide the following:
- Meet the refugees at the airport and transport them to their accommodation.
  - Provide suitable accommodation for at least 12 months.
  - Provide integration caseworker support for 12 months.
  - Enable access to English language courses (ESOL) from accredited providers for up to 12 months.
  - Provide translation services if necessary.
  - Provide assistance in accessing appropriate mental health services.
- 3.6 In addition to the SRP, the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) is also in operation. The VCRS supports children who are at risk who are in the care of their parents or other family members. Individuals will be resettled in the same way as those under the SRP and the funding levels are the same.

#### **4.0 CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 In January 2016, Lancashire pledged to resettle 575 refugees between 2016 and 2020 (500 under the SRP and 75 under the VCRS).
- 4.2 Lancashire County Council (LCC) is co-ordinating the scheme in Lancashire and is also commissioning some services as well as providing support to the districts who are accepting refugees.
- 4.3 In order to meet the pledge, the West Lancashire Borough Council is being asked to state the number of households it will resettle and when by the end of the year.
- 4.4 It is proposed that the Council pledges to resettle 5 households with an estimated arrival date of July 2017.
- 4.5 On arrival, the resettled families will be assisted into accommodation in the private rented sector. If a refugee family chooses to apply to the Council for accommodation at a later date, the application will be assessed in accordance with the Council's Housing Allocations Policy.

## 5.0 DELIVERY MODEL

5.1 Local authorities are able to decide how they will deliver the scheme locally, however, based on the experiences of the first tranche of Lancashire districts already receiving the refugees; the following delivery models have been suggested:

- deliver all services in-house
- commission certain elements to third sector organisations
- commission some services jointly with other local authorities in the region
- subcontract the whole delivery of the project to the third sector

5.2 The proposed delivery option for West Lancashire is to commission certain elements to a third sector organisation, of which there are a number of organisations currently carrying out this type of work. It is recommended that the Council sources and secures suitable accommodation in the private sector to ensure the property meets the required standards with the integration support being commissioned to a third sector organisation.

5.3 A steering group will be established in early January 2017 to fully plan the project and establish each partner's role. The steering group will also oversee the project and provide a progress report one month after arrivals.

## 6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

6.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder.

6.2 The report has no significant links with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

## 7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Funding for both the SRP and VCRS is provided through the Home Office. A specified amount is allocated for each resettled person with payments made yearly to cover:

- **Local authority costs:** currently £8,250 per each individual
- **Education:** currently £4,500 for each child aged 5-18 and £2,500 for each child aged 3-4.

7.2 The local authority costs can include:

- **Preparatory work:** securing and setting up accommodation, translation and administration costs and transport.
- **Delivery costs:** one-off cash payments of £200 per person, providing housing and integration casework support, administration and finance, ESOL provision and social care costs.

7.3 The first payment of 40% of the expected yearly cost for each individual can be claimed on the day of arrival and will be paid within 30 days. The remainder will be paid in two equal instalments at the end of the fourth and eighth month.

- 7.4 Further funding has been confirmed to cover the support required for years 2-5 although at a lower level than the year 1 allocation. The yearly funding per individual is expected to be as follows:
- Year 2: £5,000
  - Year 3: £3,700
  - Year 4: £2,300
  - Year 5: £1,000
- 7.5 LCC is responsible for making the claim to the Home Office with districts invoicing them for their costs. This process has been established due to LCC directly delivering or commissioning some services centrally e.g. health casework, ESOL etc.
- 7.6 LCC will pool the monies from the Home Office minimising risks for individual districts. This will also enable districts to invoice LCC for any pre-arrival costs even before the Home Office have released individual funds.
- 7.7 It is expected that a budget code will need to be provided to cover any pre-arrival funds but the reimbursement route will be significantly easier and timelier using LCC's approach.
- 7.8 On-going accommodation costs such as rent payments, utility bills etc. will be met by the individual household. Housing benefit can be claimed to assist in meeting rental costs (discretionary housing payments can be applied for where housing benefit does not cover the full rental amount).

## **8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 The actions referred to in this report are covered by the scheme of delegation to officers and any necessary changes have been made in the relevant risk registers.

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### **Background Documents**

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders; therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as an Appendix to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

### **Appendices**

1. Equality Impact Assessment