

## AGENDA ITEM 6

### POLICY FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

13<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2016

#### REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

#### SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME AND ASYLUM SEEKERS DISPERSAL AREA

##### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To update members on the Governments request in relation to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Asylum Seekers Dispersal Area. For members to approve an allocation in regards to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

##### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 **Members note the update on the Governments request in relation to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme and the Asylum Seekers Dispersal Area;**
- 2.2 **Members approve an allocation of 2 families (up to 10 persons) per annum in relation to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.**

##### 3.0 KEY ISSUES

###### **Background**

- 3.1 The Council has been requested to cooperate and consider how it could assist with the provision of an Asylum Seekers Dispersal Area and the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. Both schemes are voluntary although the Asylum Act 1999 provides the Secretary of State with the power to determine where asylum seekers will be housed.
- 3.2 These are two different schemes and it is important to understand the differences between the two:
- 3.3 Asylum Seekers Dispersal Area

The Council received a letter dated the 24th August 2015 from the Home Office targeted at local authorities in Yorkshire, Humber, East and West Midlands who are not currently providing Asylum Seeker Dispersal Areas. The same letter has been sent to all the local authorities currently not providing dispersal areas across the country, i.e. the request has been widened.
- 3.4 This requested cooperation to ensure that the United Kingdom is able to discharge its obligations to provide accommodation to those claiming asylum. The Asylum and Immigration Act 1999 was introduced with the intention of sharing the impact of

dispersal of asylum seekers across the United Kingdom and to ease the over reliance on any one area.

- 3.5 Recent events have increased the number of people who have either become displaced or who require support and assistance.
- 3.6 Asylum seekers enter the United Kingdom and claim asylum, they have no status until a decision has been made on their application, therefore they are not entitled to mainstream benefits and the funding provided is from the Home Office. The first stage of the decision making process will be within six months of receipt of an application.
- 3.7 During the assessment period the Home Office provides and pays an allowance of £35 per week per person and accommodation is provided while a decision is being made.
- 3.8 If an application is successful an asylum seeker with a family will become eligible for mainstream benefits and access to housing. Single people will receive benefits but not be eligible for housing.
- 3.9 Currently there are three Asylum Seekers Dispersal Areas in the East Midlands which have provided support since 2000 to those awaiting a decision on their application. These are located in:
  - Derbyshire
  - Leicester
  - Nottinghamshire
- 3.10 Currently 2,600 asylum seekers are accommodated in the East Midlands awaiting a decision on their application. They are accommodated predominately in the private rented sector or within registered provider's accommodation. Intake currently stands at 70% singles and 30% families.
- 3.11 G4S procure and manage the accommodation in the above three Asylum Seekers Dispersal Areas and has an agreed Statement of Requirements with the Home Office. G4S is a private contractor and is monitored by the Home Office. The property agent used by G4S is Live Management Group based in Leicester.
- 3.12 G4S agree a protocol with the local authority to decide the following:
  - What involvement the local authority wants to have in the use of properties within its area.
  - Agree a particular part of the local authority area that can be used.
  - Provide a post code check of the identified property, condition of property, affordability, anti-social behaviour etc., suggest alternative accommodation and or landlords.
  - Which agencies should be consulted when a property is identified to agree its suitability, i.e. Police, County Council, Social Care, Children Services etc.
- 3.13 The requirements of the Asylum Seekers Dispersal Area are for the Home Office to provide not more than one asylum seeker per two hundred population or up to a

maximum of 10% of the overall population of the local authority area (Leicester currently provides 55% of the one to two hundred figure).

3.14 It is not proposed at this stage to consider an allocation for Asylum Seekers in Melton, this is consistent with a view held by other districts in the County, except Oadby & Wigston who have been approached directly by the Government.

3.15 Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme .

The Government's announcement included an intention to expand the existing scheme which currently assists women and children that are at risk, have been tortured and have a medical need. The target is to resettle four hundred individuals per month from October 2015, although this could be scaled up.

3.16 There are currently no details of the individuals who will arrive in the United Kingdom although there will be an emphasis on children and young people. The refugees will be allocated to appropriate accommodation where this is available across the country.

3.17 The nearest local authority providing a Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme to the Council is Leicester City.

3.18 The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will identify cases from the refugee camps and refer these to the Home Office, UNHCR will have completed eligibility criteria, medical and security checks and the Home Office will conduct visa checks. At the same time the details of the case will be passed to the local authority who has agreed to participate in the scheme, at which point the local authority can accept or reject the cases.

3.19 The UNHCR identifies people in need of resettlement based on the following criteria: 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 sexual orientation or gender identity; and refugees with family links in resettlement countries.

3.20 The Syrian Vulnerable People are not asylum seekers and have leave to remain in the United Kingdom from day one. As refugees they will be granted a five year humanitarian protection visa. This will entitle refugees access to public funds including housing, access to the labour market and the possibility of family reunion.

3.21 For the current Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme the Government aims to give local authorities a minimum of four weeks' notice of new arrivals with longer notice for complex cases.

3.22 The Government has indicated that given the specific requirements of this group of people, this list is not definitive and is open to negotiation if local authorities consider there are other elements not covered that would require funding in order to administer an orientation programme of this kind. The Government has indicated that it recognises that the final figure may fluctuate between differing local authorities due to local circumstances which may increase or decrease costs. It is anticipated that Government announcements about the expanded Scheme, and hopefully some consultation with local authorities and other bodies, will address outstanding and fresh issues of cost and affordability.

- 3.23 The local authority determines the number of refugees that can be assisted through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in their local authority area. Local authorities need to ensure that they have the infrastructure and support networks needed to ensure the appropriate care and integration of refugees.
- 3.24 Members are asked to approve an allocation of 2 families per year (up to 10 people) for Melton in respect of the Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme. It is proposed that the accommodation for this scheme is met from the Private Rented Sector.
- 3.25 An Asylum Seekers and Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme Working group covering the City, Leicestershire County Council and Rutland County Council has been established and will coordinate the services and support needed for this scheme.
- 3.26 A Statement of Requirements has been developed for the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme which outlines a number of requirements at both the pre arrival and post arrival stage and is attached as Appendix A. Officers have also attended a number of briefing sessions in Leicester, Coventry and Nottingham to learn from other Authorities from their experience of accepting referrals from this scheme.

#### **4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are links to corporate priorities around promoting independent living and Healthier communities.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Government funding is intended to cover a range of measures to assist the support and orientation of this group of people.
- 5.2 In respect of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme the Government has said that it will meet the costs of the arrivals in terms of orientation support, health and education costs for the first year based on the existing scheme. A letter from the Home Office on the 2nd October 2015 confirmed that further funding will be available to assist with costs incurred in future years, which will be on a reducing scale from year 1 to year 5. Final figures are still being developed however, they will need to cover a range of support services that the Council will need to provide for Syrian Vulnerable Persons relocated in Melton.
- 5.3 Subject to members approval officers will utilise funds appropriately from the Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme to ensure we meet our requirements under the scheme.

#### **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

- 6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme is a voluntary scheme.

**7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no direct implications. the Police are a key partner in the Working Group as an advisory member.

**8.0 EQUALITIES**

8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been carried out at this stage however, early indications suggest positive impacts for groups and an EIA will be completed when a process has been developed subject to members recommendations at this committee meeting.

**9.0 RISKS**

**9.1 Probability**

↓

Very High A				
High B				
Significant C				
Low D		1	2,3	
Very Low E				
Almost Impossible F				
	I Neg- ligible	II Marg- inal	III Critical	IV Catast- rophic

→  
**Impact**

Risk No.	Description
1	Members do not approve any allocation as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme
2	Appropriate support is not in place for Persons accepted under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme.
3	Funding does not cover the cost of support services provided .

**10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE**

10.1 No Direct Implications have been identified.

**11.0 CONSULTATION**

11.1 Update and briefing sessions have been held with other authorities across the sub-region on how best to respond to the Governments request for request in relation to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Asylum Seekers Dispersal Area and this report is a result of those discussions

## 12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

### 12.1 All Wards

Contact Officer: Harrinder Rai

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Appendices: Appendix A – Syrian Vulnerable Relocation Scheme- statement of Requirements

Background Papers:

Reference: X/Ctees/PFA/2015-16/130416/HR- Syrian vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme