

REPORT OF: HOUSING, HEALTH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
MANAGER

TO: EXECUTIVE

DATES: 21st SEPTEMBER 2017

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**SYRIAN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME (SRP) &
LOCAL INTEGRATION FUND (LIF)**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To update Executive regarding the implementation of the SRP
2. To agree to proposed changes to the administration of LIF so that all recommendations for awards are subject to Executive approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note developments in relation to the implementation of SRP
2. To agree the process for the administration of LIF for future funding awards, as set out in Appendix 3
3. To agree to receive future reports when applications to the fund have been received

ISSUE

Syrian Refugee Programme (SRP) in Pendle

As a response to the Syrian Refugee crisis, the Council offered to welcome twenty Syrian refugee households to the borough. In September 2016, an initial eight families arrived, followed by two additional families in November 2016. Subsequently, a further ten families arrived in July 2017.

Cohort 1 - families who arrived in September and November 2016.

All ten families were initially rehoused within Rossendale Borough Council properties (formerly AAW Ltd property). The main reasons for using these properties were due to the relative

availability of the accommodation / geographical spread and also an opportunity to bring ten empty properties back into use. Unfortunately, despite assurances that the properties would meet all standards, problems such as damp and holes in roofs started to appear once the accommodation began to be lived in and winter set in. All disrepair complaints were taken forward by Calico (managing agent) and where possible, rectified. However, in some cases, the problems were significant and may have taken considerable time to rectify. Consequently, all households were offered help to move into alternative accommodation. To date:-

- six families have been assisted to move
- one family is happy to stay where they are
- one family will be moved shortly
- two families still wish to move but unfortunately to date, it has not been possible to secure the type of property within the area they wish to live

There have been a number of issues since September 2016, which has posed considerable challenges. This included disrepair within properties and issues related to the quality of interpretation. However, whilst there have been challenges, many have been overcome and on the whole, resettlement of these families has proved to be broadly successful.

In their second year following arrival ie from 29th September 2017, families will continue to receive support with employment, interpretation, ESOL (9hrs per week, which will include child care and transportation provision), health, and caseworker support – though to a lesser degree of intensity.

Cohort 2 - families who arrived in July 2017

All families arrived in Pendle on 18th July 2017 and were successfully transferred to their allocated accommodation (properties owned and managed by Calico). Subsequently, a 'Welcome to Pendle' Event was held on Friday 21st July 2017 which was extremely well attended by agencies / Cohort 1 families and offered the families a very warm welcome to Pendle. Since this time, intensive-orientation / resettlement work has been undertaken to register families for doctors, job centre plus, schools, credit union accounts and to help families link in with local agencies and families from Cohort 1.

There have only been very minor disrepair issues within the properties which were quickly resolved and it is not anticipated that families will encounter the same issues with disrepair that Cohort 1 families have experienced. To date, resettlement appears to have gone relatively smoothly.

Overall progress to date

SRP has proved to be a particularly complex process involving a number of statutory and VCFS agencies. Whilst there have been significant issues in delivering SRP in Pendle over the previous 12 months, many of these issues were unforeseen and not within the Councils control. That said, where it has been possible to respond to challenges and improve on processes / services, these have been taken. Whilst much work still needs to be done, the resettlement of Cohort 1 continues apace and there are very encouraging signs that by learning the lessons from the issues faced by Cohort 1, that the resettlement of Cohort 2 will be considerably more successful.

A Refugee Resettlement Group was set up before the arrival of the first Cohort so that all agencies and organisations involved in the resettlement programme could work together in a joined up way to support the Refugees. The remit of the Group was subsequently expanded to include Asylum Seekers and was renamed the Pendle - Displaced Persons Resettlement Steering Group. The Group continues to meet on a regular basis and is a useful forum to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

Local Integration Fund (LIF)

The Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) has three objectives:

1. **Secure** and protect refugees and the UK
2. Have the **wellbeing** of the refugee and the welcoming communities at the centre of decision making, including by delivering refugee independence and self-sufficiency to enable better social cohesion; and
3. Deliver **value for money** for the UK tax payer, including by minimising the burden on local and national government by securing early independence and self-sufficiency.

The Lancashire SRP aims to achieve these aims through close co-operation between local authorities and its partners in the public and third sectors in delivering a comprehensive integration programme for resettled refugees and the welcoming communities. To that end, it has established a Local Integration Fund (LIF) to enable local projects and activities that bring resettled refugees and local communities together to deliver the aims of the SRP. It was agreed that each borough in receipt of Syrian refugees would administer its own LIF.

It was felt that in Pendle it made sense to follow the broad guidelines set by Lancashire SRP and as such, administration of the LIF included use of the specification issues by LCC and an application form was developed, based on the objectives of the scheme. Decisions were taken based on a broad scoring system and successful bidders were required to enter into a Grant Agreement with the Council. To date, awards have been made totalling £11,651. The successful bidders were Pendle New Neighbours, People's Enterprise and Employment Forum (PEEF), Home Start, Pennine Oaks and Inspiring Grace.

Proposed changes to the administration of the scheme

Lancashire SRP has recently confirmed that there will be additional funding available to Pendle LIF to distribute. This includes:-

Cohort 1

- Year 1 - £20k – as £11,651 has already been distributed, a further £8,349 needs to be distributed
- Year 2 - £15k to be distributed from 29th September 2017.
- Years 3 to 5 although no decisions have been taken, there may be funding available

Cohort 2

- Year 1 £20k to be distributed
- Year 2 – it is anticipated that, like Cohort 1 Year 2, there will be c£15k funding to distribute from 18th July 2018.
- Years 3 to 5 although no decisions have been taken, there may be funding available

In consideration of this significant rise in funding and period of time over which funding will be available and to improve accountability, it is proposed that the decision-making process which is currently officer-led, be altered so that whilst officer can make recommendations, the Councils Executive will decide whether to approve awards or not. As such, additional documents have been developed which includes:-

- Proposed Pendle LIF Procedures
- Proposed Pendle LIF Specification form for prospective bidders to the scheme (Appendix 1)
- Proposed Pendle LIF Application Form
- Proposed Pendle LIF Assessment Form – for submission to Executive

The Executive are asked to agree to this change to the administration of the scheme based on the above documents. If agreed, it is proposed that further bids will be sought in October 2017.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy

Whilst no current policy is in place for LIF, the report proposes change to how the LIF is administered in Pendle.

Financial

Funding for the Pendle SRP and LIF comes directly from Lancashire SRP, consequently there are no known financial implications arising from this report. Each successful organisation will need to sign a Service Level Agreement

Legal

There are no known legal implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

There is risk to reputation should the Council fail to successfully implement SRP and administer the LIF in a fair manner. It is felt that SRP is being delivered successfully and the proposed changes to administration of LIF will strengthen accountability.

Health and Safety:

There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.

Sustainability:

Both SRP and the LIF are long-term commitments and are intended to contribute towards community cohesion within the borough.

Community Safety:

SRP has the potential to raise community safety issues. However, there is believed to be considerable goodwill within Pendle in supporting Syrian refugees and many local services are willing to provide support.

Equality and Diversity:

As the Programme and the LIF funding is specifically for Syrian refugees, it will be targeted at a minority ethnic group rather than being open to all.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Proposed Pendle LIF Procedures – Sept 17

Appendix 2 – Proposed Pendle LIF Specification Form – Sept 17

Appendix 3 – Proposed Pendle LIF Application Form – Sept 2017

Appendix 4 – Proposed Pendle LIF Assessment Form – Sept 17