

REPORT OF: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DATES: 19th AUGUST 2021

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UK RESETTLEMENT SCHEME (UKRS) and AFGHAN RELOCATION SCHEME (AFGHAN LES)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To update the Committee on the UKRS and the Council's commitment to participate in this scheme; and also on the Afghan Locally Engaged Staff Relocation Scheme (Afghan LES).
2. To seek ratification of approval for the Council's participation in accepting refugee families from February 2022 under UKRS; and to consider the commitment to participate in Afghan LES.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Committee confirm approval to the Council's participation in accepting refugee families from February 2022 under UKRS.
2. That the Leader and Interim Chief Executive be authorised to hold discussions with Calico and Together Housing and any similar bodies and in the light of the outcome of these discussions inform LCC of the Council's commitment to support Afghan LES.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To respond to requests from Government and LCC to commit to supporting refugees.

UKRS

1. In June 2019, the Government confirmed its ongoing commitment to resettle refugees in the United Kingdom year on year under the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS). This superseded the previous Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme.
2. In November 2019, all Lancashire districts were approached by Lancashire County Council (LCC) and asked to commit towards this scheme in supporting ten refugee households

each over a four year period. The Council's Leadership Group agreed to this request. However, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic we subsequently advised LCC that we remained committed to the scheme but that we would not be able to accept the first five refugee households until at the earliest February 2022.

3. The UKRS has now resumed and LCC is asking councils to reaffirm their participation.
4. The Council has previously delivered upon a similar scheme, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SRP) whereby twenty Syrian refugee households were successfully resettled in our area from 2016.
5. Under UKRS refugees can come from anywhere within the world, not just Syria. However the Council can request that all households come from a similar region so as to avoid isolation of any particular household. It is anticipated that refugee households would likely come from the Middle East and / or North Africa, as these regions have tended to have the highest numbers going through the asylum seeker dispersal programme.
6. Refugee households are not anticipated to arrive all at once in a council area, they would arrive as property is sourced for their use.
7. LCC will act as the recipient of Central Government funding and there will be an agreement between LCC and the Council for its distribution which should not result in any cost to the Council.
8. The Council will enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Calico Enterprise to deliver the vast majority of the Council's obligations under the scheme, namely:
 - a. Furnished housing which meets required standards
 - b. Initial reception arrangements and orientation services
 - c. Caseworker / floating support provision

Afghan LES

9. In July all local authorities were requested by the Secretaries of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Defence and Home Office to support the resettlement of Afghan Locally Employed Staff by way of housing, integration and other support. The Government sees this scheme as additional to UKRS and, at this time, of greater priority and urgency.
10. This reflects the changing situation in Afghanistan and the needs of significant number of Afghan nationals who worked alongside British forces and now need to relocate to the UK. From a Government webinar last week it is clear the Government is bringing considerable pressure to bear on all councils to take part.
11. As with UKRS, Government funding is being provided via LCC who will again have a coordinating role. The funding should cover the Council's costs.
12. The Council does not of course have housing accommodation and it will be necessary to have further detailed discussion with Calico and Together Housing to identify the size of the commitment the Council can give.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy

There are no policy implications arising from this report.

Financial

Agreement will be entered into with LCC under which it is anticipated there will not be any cost to the Council.

Legal

Agreements will be put in place between LCC and the Council. The vast majority of the Council's obligations will be delivered via a Service Level Agreement with Calico or other third party.

Risk Management

There is risk to reputation should the Council fail to successfully implement UKRS, both in terms of failure to support the Home Office and failure to deliver on its commitment to LCC to participate in this scheme.

Health and Safety:

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

Sustainability:

The UKRS is a long-term commitment and intended to contribute towards community cohesion within the Borough.

Equality and Diversity:

There are no equality and diversity issues arising from the contents of this report.

Appendices

None