



Item

Refugee Resettlement – Delivering the pledge to resettle 200 more refugees

To:

Councillor Mike Todd-Jones, Executive Councillor for Housing
Housing Scrutiny Committee [22/06/2021]

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Cambridge City Council has pledged to resettle 200 more refugees under the Home Office Syrian Vulnerable People Relocation (SVPR) and Vulnerable Children Relocation (VCR) schemes over the next five years. A major part of the resettlement programme is the provision of housing.
- 1.2 The resettlement programmes were postponed due to Covid restrictions and, recently, the Home Office began again to offer profiles of families to be housed. The families currently seeking resettlement tend to be large with a minimum of two adults and 3 or 4 children, requiring a 3 or 4-bedroom property.
- 1.3 The Council would need to source around 8 homes per year to fulfil the pledge to resettle 200 more refugees over the five-year period; that is approximately 40 families.

- 1.4 Working with other districts we would hope to source around 4 homes from outside Cambridge and 4 from within the Cambridge City social housing stock.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

Agree to allocate a maximum of 4 City Council properties per annum, outside of the current Lettings Policy, for the next five years, to help deliver the pledge to resettle 200 more refugees.

3. Background

- 3.1 Cambridge City Council previously resettled 101 people under the Home Office Syrian Vulnerable People Relocation (SVPR) and Vulnerable Children Relocation (VCR) programmes in the city and surrounding districts. Subsequently, working jointly with South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) the Council also resettled a further 15 people.
- 3.2 Due to Covid-19, resettlement of refugees was stalled from March 2020 to recently when the Home Office began again to offer profiles of refugee families to be housed. The families are mainly 5 or more people with complex physical and mental health needs.
- 3.3 The SVPR and VPR schemes cater for those people fleeing conflict from Syria to neighbouring countries and vulnerable refugee children and their families from the Middle East and North Africa.
- 3.4 The tariff paid to the Local Authority for each individual refugee resettled remains the same for 2021/22 as it was in previous years and continues for a five-year period from the date of arrival in the UK.
- 3.5 Cambridge City Council has pledged to resettle a further 200 refugees over a five-year period from the re-start of the Home Office resettlement programmes, working with other districts to source accommodation.
- 3.6 To fulfil the pledge, it is estimated the Council would need to source around 8 homes per year, based on families of 2 adults and 3 or 4 children. Working with other districts we would hope to source around 4

homes from outside Cambridge and 4 from within the Cambridge City social housing stock.

- 3.7 With increased pressure on council housing, the Council cannot remove housing from the current Lettings Policy in an ad hoc way.
- 3.8 A clear and transparent decision to commit to letting to 4 families per year for a 5 year period, from the City Council stock, outside of the current Lettings Policy would clarify the position and, would help to achieve the pledge to resettle 200 more refugees over the five year period.
- 3.9 The most acute need for accommodation from both the Council's housing register and in terms of homeless households triggering the Council's statutory housing duty, comes from those in need of 1-bedroom accommodation. Therefore, offering a small number of larger properties per annum should not greatly exacerbate housing need pressures in the city.
- 3.9 Work to reach agreement with other districts to source further housing outside the city is underway.

4. Implications

a) Financial Implications

The Home Office gives a grant per refugee on a sliding scale for the first five years from the date of arrival in the UK. The grant covers the cost of setting up the homes and supporting the resettled people.

b) Staffing Implications

It may be necessary to recruit a further support officer. The Home Office grant covers salary costs for the management and support services for the schemes.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment is being prepared and will be available at the time of the Committee meeting.

d) Environmental Implications

Nil

e) Procurement Implications

The scheme includes furnishing of the properties and a procurement agreement is in place to purchase the required items.

f) Community Safety Implications

None

5. Consultation and communication considerations

- 5.1 Discussions with the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA), as representatives of the Home Office, have taken place about the housing requirements of the resettlement schemes.
- 5.2 Discussions have also been held with the Strategic Director, Head of Community Services and Community Safety Manager.
- 5.3 The Chair of Housing Scrutiny Committee, the Executive Councillor, Leader of the Council have been consulted in relation to bringing a report asking for permission to let accommodation to refugees under the Home Office resettlement programme.
- 5.4 Letters have been sent to partner district authorities, with housing responsibilities, in Cambridgeshire seeking assistance with the scheme.

6. Background papers

A review of the Syrian Vulnerable People Relocation and Vulnerable Children Relocation Schemes in Cambridge.

Funding Instruction for local authorities in support of the United Kingdom's Resettlement Schemes

7. Appendices.

None

8. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Lynda Kilkelly, Community Safety Manager, telephone:01223 457045, email: Lynda.kilkelly@cambridge.gov.uk