



Accommodation for Ukranian Refugees

To:

Report to
Housing Scrutiny 22nd September 2022

Report by:

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Wards affected:

All wards

Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In response to the war in Ukraine the Government launched its *Homes for Ukraine* sponsorship scheme in March 2022. UK households were invited to host Ukranian refugees for a minimum six-month period or preferably longer. Many hosts have come forward from our district to support the scheme. Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Council have amongst the highest number of hosts for all district authorities across the UK. As at 1st September there were 383 guests spread across 203 households in Cambridge City. Clearly, these arrangements are not permanent and Ukranian households have initially been offered 3-year visas. Therefore, the Council is devising a homelessness prevention plan and the potential allocation of a small number of properties is part of this plan and provides the focus for this report.

- 1.2 There is a precedent for this action; in June 2021 Housing Scrutiny Committee approved the allocation of Council tenancies to Syrian refugees. To date we have housed 13 such households in Council accommodation.

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the allocation of up to 20 Council properties to Ukrainian refugees to support the Council's homelessness prevention plans and avert the need for temporary accommodation.
- 2.2 Allow these allocations to be made outside of the Council's Lettings Policy
- 2.3 Delegate authority to the Head of Housing, in consultation with the Executive Councillor and Opposition Spokespersons, to extend this scheme beyond 20 units, in the event that there is excessive pressure on temporary accommodation.

3. Background

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- 3.1 Following the Government's launch of its *Homes for Ukraine* sponsorship scheme the people of Cambridge have responded positively with many offers of support to host Ukrainian families, as outlined in paragraph 1.1 of this report. These arrangements are typically within the family home with occasional offers of self-contained accommodation such as annexes.
- 3.2 Hosts receive 'thank you' payments from the Government, issued by local authorities, for engaging in the scheme but are not permitted to charge rent for the accommodation.
- 3.3 Local and national data analysis work, unsurprisingly, suggests that most sponsorship arrangements are not long term; local data from hosts across Cambridgeshire suggests that only 23% are willing to fulfil the host role for more than 12 months.
- 3.4 Looking at what we know to date about host commitments, the Council's own assessment suggests that the end of host arrangements within Cambridge City could peak in October and November of this year.

- 3.5 The County Council has been promised £10,500 per individual refugee under the *Homes for Ukraine* Scheme and, in view of the potential homelessness pressure emerging later this year, the Council has been drawing up a homelessness prevention plan focused on support and accommodation options. We are currently in discussions with the County Council about this plan and the release of funds to put it into practice.
- 3.6 With respect to the accommodation options, the Council will first look at ‘rematching’ with an alternative host where existing hosting arrangements look likely to come to an end. However, incentives or additional support for existing hosts to continue for a longer period will also be explored.
- 3.7 If an existing host arrangement cannot be extended and a ‘rematch’ is not identified, the Council is planning to extend its [HB Plus scheme](#) with a bespoke package to secure private rented accommodation for Ukrainian households in, or on the outskirts, of Cambridge.
- 3.8 In the event that a suitable private rented sector offer is not forthcoming, the Council proposes working with housing association partners and using its own stock (up to a maximum of 20 properties) to secure accommodation to help avert the need for expensive temporary accommodation
- 3.9 The intention is that this pool of properties would be available to use for this purpose as long as the *Homes for Ukraine* scheme is in operation
- 3.10 In considering allocations into Council and housing association accommodation officers will consider housing register pressures in relation to different bedroom categories. At the time of writing this report supply of larger properties (i.e. 3 and 4 bedroom accommodation) does not meet demand and one bedroom need makes up the vast majority of the Council’s homeless households. Therefore, officers are more likely to target two-bedroom accommodation for use for Ukrainian households as supply exceeds demand in this bedroom category.
- 3.11 Of the 203 Ukrainian households currently on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme in the City, household sizes breakdown as follows:
- 1 person households = 47%
- 2 person households = 30%

3 person households = 16%
4 person households = 5%
5 person households = 2%

4. Implications

a) Financial Implications

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There are no financial implications for this proposal. The Council's wider homelessness prevention plan in relation to the *Homes for Ukraine* scheme should be funded in its entirety from government funds, allocated via the County Council. If these funds are not agreed prior to the Council's 2023-24 budget setting process, officers will provide further detail via the budget setting report, which will come to Housing Scrutiny Committee in January 2023.

b) Staffing Implications

None.

c) Equality and Poverty Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed for this paper as this proposal is a temporary measure and relates to households to whom the Council would be likely to owe a statutory homelessness duty to in any event.

d) Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental Implications

No impact.

e) Procurement Implications

None.

f) Community Safety Implications

None.

5. Consultation and communication considerations

The Council is currently engaged in discussions with the County Council over its *Homes for Ukraine* homelessness prevention plan. The strand of this plan as outlined in this report will be subject to further discussion with key housing association partners operating in Cambridge City.

In the event that it is proposed to extend this scheme beyond the initial 20 units of accommodation more detailed consultation will be required with Home-Link (the sub-regional choice-based lettings/ social housing allocations system) partners

6. Background papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

7. Appendices

None

8. Inspection of papers

Not applicable