

## Pledge to Support the Resettlement of Refugees

**To:**

Cllr Gerri Bird, Executive Councillor for Housing

Housing Scrutiny Committee, 11/03/2025

**Report by:**

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**Wards affected:**

All

<b>1.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
1.1	<p>It is recommended that the Executive Councillor for Housing:</p> <p>Agree the pledge to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome refugees and asylum seekers to rebuild their lives in Cambridge and the surrounding areas through wraparound support under our resettlement programme.</li> <li>• Allocate a minimum 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 refugees. With a proportion of these properties provided to refugees that require secure accommodation as prescribed by central Government refugee schemes.</li> <li>• Engage with the East of England Strategic Migration Partnership to identify suitable accommodation for refugees based on household needs.</li> <li>• Provide advice to refugees who are homeless to explore their housing options, including the Private Rented Sector.</li> <li>• Work alongside local communities, agencies, and charities to provide services that support welcoming, cohesion, and the removal of any barriers to resettlement.</li> </ul>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Purpose and reason for the report</b>
2.1	Cambridge is a city of sanctuary. Over the last 10 years we have proudly welcomed and supported refugees navigating their new lives Cambridge and the surrounding areas.
2.2	In 2020 the Council made a pledge to resettle 200 refugees over 5 years. A major part of the resettlement programme is the provision of housing. In 2021, the Council agreed

	to provide 4 council properties per annum, outside of the current Lettings Policy, for the next five years, to help deliver the pledge. This was matched by South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC).
2.3	The Council has successfully delivered our pledge commitment, but since agreeing our pledge millions more people have been forcibly displaced as refugees.
2.4	To continue our resettlement work in this time of heightened need, we need to renew our resettlement pledge including the allocation of housing outside of the current Lettings Policy. Work is underway with SCDC to jointly renew a matched pledge.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Alternative options considered</b>
3.1	<p>Alternative Option 1: The Council's refugee resettlement pledge ends in 2025.</p> <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council would continue to support refugees who've already arrived, but would no longer accept new refugees via the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) (see 4.3 for further information on these schemes).</li> <li>• Those on the Homes for Ukraine scheme would continue to arrive in the city as arrival are determined by residents acting as hosts. This would create a discrepancy between the Council's support for refugees from Ukraine and refugees from other parts of the world.</li> <li>• Cambridge City Council would be at risk of losing its City of Sanctuary status.</li> <li>• The Council would be acting contrary to the corporate plan commitment to <i>"meet the needs of the most vulnerable, including refugees."</i></li> <li>• Staff redundancies would need to be considered as there would be less refugees requiring resettlement support and therefore less funding from government.</li> </ul>
3.2	<p>Alternative Option 2: The Council's refugee resettlement pledge is renewed for a further 5 years without any updates.</p> <p>Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council's 2020 pledge relates solely to the Syrian Vulnerable People Relocation (SVPR) and Vulnerable Children Relocation (VCR) programmes. These schemes have since ended due to the creation of the UKRS.</li> <li>• Even if the pledge wording was updated to include the UKRS, it would not include the various other government resettlement schemes that the Council delivers (see</li> </ul>

	4.3). The Council would therefore have to end its resettlement support for specific refugee groups i.e. Afghan refugees. This could have significant equality implications.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Background and key issues</b>
4.1	In 2015, the Council pledged to resettle 50 Syrian refugees in three years under the Home Office Syrian Vulnerable People Relocation (SVPR) and Vulnerable Children Relocation (VCR) programmes. The Council achieved this in 18 months. The Council were then asked by central government to support in the resettlement of a further 50 Syrian refugees, which was achieved by November 2018.
4.2	In 2020 the Council made a pledge to resettle 200 refugees over 5 years. A major part of the resettlement programme is the provision of housing. In 2021, the Council agreed to provide 4 council properties per annum, outside of the current Lettings Policy, for the next five years, to help deliver the pledge. This pledge was matched by SCDC. Both pledges have been achieved.
4.3	<p>Since our 2020 pledge millions more people have been displaced as refugees. The Government has responded by creating the following schemes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)</b> – a global scheme managed by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. UKRS replaced the Syrian specific resettlement schemes.</li> <li>• <b>Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP)</b> - managed by the UK government, resettling Afghan citizens that worked for the UK government in Afghanistan and their families.</li> <li>• <b>Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)</b> - managed by the UK government, to resettle people at risk in Afghanistan since the Taliban take over, i.e. human rights campaigners.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine Schemes</b> – schemes managed by the UK government for Homes for Ukraine (host/guest sponsorship), Family visa scheme (a family member acting as the sponsor) and Ukraine Extension scheme (extending the leave to remain of Ukrainians already in the UK when the war broke out). Both Family Visa and Ukraine Extension Scheme ended on 19 February 2024 and 16 May 2024 respectively. A new Ukraine Permission Extension scheme was launched on 4 February 2025 allowing those on existing Ukraine visas to extend their stay for a</li> </ul>

	<p>further 18 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Hong Kong British National Overseas (BNO)</b> – enables BNO status holders and their children (both over and under 18 years old) to resettle in the UK.</li> <li>• <b>National Asylum Dispersal</b> – temporary accommodation across the country to house asylum seekers. Nationally, 52% of initial decisions and 48% of appeals result in refugee status or humanitarian protection<sup>1</sup>.</li> </ul>
4.4	Over the last 5 years Cambridge City Council have successfully supported 915 newly arrived refugees to resettle in Cambridge and the surrounding areas. The majority of refugees resettled are from Ukraine and Afghanistan.
4.5	The Council receives tariffs to enable the resettlement of refugees arriving via the UKRS, ARAP, ACRS and Homes for Ukraine Scheme. This allows us to provide wrap-around resettlement support to those arriving via these pathways.
4.6	In 2024, the Council surveyed those currently in receipt of support via the UKRS, ARAP and ACRS schemes as per government requirements. Of those surveyed, 82% felt a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood and 84% felt welcomed in the UK.
4.7	There is currently an asylum hotel in South Cambridgeshire. Cambridge City Council receive funding from SCDC to provide wrap-around support to those with high needs who have left the asylum hotel following a positive immigration decision i.e. refugee status or humanitarian protection.
4.8	Cambridge City Council funds Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum to provide support to any asylum seekers and refugees in the city.
4.9	Under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, residents across Cambridge agreed to act as hosts, providing housing for those arriving from Ukraine. As hosting ends, refugees from Ukraine are supported by the Council to access secure accommodation, via our statutory homelessness duties. Homelessness duties can be relieved through a suitable offer of private rental accommodation or social housing.
4.10	Under the UK Resettlement Scheme, Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, the government requires that the local authority ensures refugees have suitable secure accommodation prior to their arrival in the local authority area.
4.11	In December 2022, the Government launched the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) scheme, enabling councils to purchase properties to help reduce the risk of

<sup>1</sup> [Top facts from the latest statistics on refugees and people seeking asylum - Refugee Council](#)

	homelessness to Ukrainian and Afghan refugees.
4.12	So far have been three rounds of the LAHF, enabling the council to purchase a total of 40 properties for refugees. Thus far 37 properties have been purchased.
4.13	To continue our refugee resettlement work, the Council needs to renew its resettlement pledge. The revised pledge (see subsection 2) takes into account the Government schemes established since 2020 and the expansion of the council's resettlement work.
4.14	The proposed pledge would commit the Council to a minimum of 4 properties per annum over 5 years without additional government funding. Should additional funding be received, for example through further LAHF funding we believe we would be able to exceed this commitment, subject to grant requirements and delivery timeframes.
4.15	With increased pressure on council housing, the Council cannot remove housing from the current Lettings Policy in an ad hoc way. A clear and transparent decision to commit to letting 4 homes 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 renewed pledge.
4.16	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. The majority of refugees who require secure housing as part of their resettlement to Cambridge are families, on average 2 parents and 3 – 4 children. Therefore, offering a small number of larger properties per annum should not greatly exacerbate housing need pressures in the city.
4.17	Work is underway with South Cambridgeshire District Council to agree a matched pledge commitment.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Corporate plan</b>
5.1	This decision is linked to the Corporate Plan priority of <a href="#">Tackling poverty and inequality and helping people in the greatest need</a> . The Corporate Plan outlines how we will meet the needs of the most vulnerable, with specific reference to refugees. One of the key performance indicators in the Corporate Plan is reporting on the number of refugees settled and supported. Failure to renew the pledge would have a significant negative impact on this performance measure.  <a href="#">Corporate plan 2022-27: our priorities for Cambridge - Cambridge City Council</a>

6.	<b>Consultation, engagement and communication</b>
6.1	<p>Consultation has taken place with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal teams within the Council - City Homes and Housing Advice,</li> <li>• Local Government resettlement organisations - East of England Local Government Association, Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council,</li> <li>• Key voluntary sector organisations via the Cambridge Resettlement Community Group including, Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum, Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Campaign, Beam and Cambridge Women's Resource Centre</li> </ul> <p>All those consulted supported the pledge commitments.</p>
7.	<b>Anticipated outcomes, benefits or impact</b>
7.1	<p>If the recommendation is accepted the Council will be able to continue its Corporate Plan commitment to <i>“meet the needs of the most vulnerable, including refugees.”</i> This will be measured by the number of refugees resettled, outcomes achieved such as access to English classes, access to employment and percentage of refugees feeling welcomed in Cambridge.</p>
8.	<b>Implications</b>
8.1	<b>Relevant risks</b>
	<p>Impact on housing register - 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. The majority of refugees are families, on average 2 parents and 3 – 4 children. Therefore, offering a small number of larger properties per annum should not greatly exacerbate housing need pressures in the city.</p>
	<b>Financial Implications</b>

8.2	The government gives a grant per refugee from the date of arrival in the UK. The grant covers the cost of the scheme requirements including furniture and supporting the resettled people.
	<b>Legal Implications</b>
8.3	There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.
	<b>Equalities and socio-economic Implications</b>
8.4	<p>Approval of the report would have positive equality and socio-economic impacts. Key impacts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secure accommodation enabling children to access education.</li> <li>- Properties obtained, matched to household size and need, including accessibility needs.</li> <li>- Provision of support enabling refugees to access bank accounts, welfare benefits, income maximisation and employment</li> <li>- Person centred holistic support including access to wellbeing and mental health support to address the impact of trauma</li> <li>- Cultural and language specific service provision</li> </ul> <p>Further information regarding equalities impacts can be found in Appendix A.</p>
	<b>Net Zero Carbon, Climate Change and Environmental implications</b>
8.5	Nil
	<b>Procurement Implications</b>
8.6	The scheme includes furnishing of the properties and a procurement agreement is in place to purchase the required items.
	<b>Community Safety Implications</b>
8.7	None

9.	<p><b>Background documents</b></p> <p>Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985</p>
9.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Scrutiny Committee Paper 2021, <a href="#">Refugee resettlement programme.pdf</a></li> <li>• Urgent approval to deliver longer term humanitarian scheme accommodation (Local Authority Housing Fund Round 1), <a href="#">Decision - £500M Local Authority Housing Fund Refugee Scheme – Approval to Deliver Longer Term Humanitarian Scheme Accommodation Through the 22-32 New Build Housing Programme, Partly Funded by Central Government - Cambridge Council</a></li> <li>• Local Authority Housing Fund Round 2, <a href="#">Officer Report Urgent Decision Local Authority Housing Fund Refugee Scheme Round 2 - 23-06-2023.pdf</a></li> <li>• Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3, <a href="#">LAHF Round 3 FINAL.pdf</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">UK Resettlement Scheme funding instructions</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Afghan schemes: funding instructions 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Homes for Ukraine Scheme (2024-25) local authority tariff payment grant determination No. 31/7472 (England) - GOV.UK</a></li> </ul>
10.	<p><b>Appendices</b></p>
10.1	<p>Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)</p>
	<p>To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact Keryn Jalli, Community Safety Manager, tel: 07562 308 141, email: <a href="mailto:keryn.jalli@cambridge.gov.uk">keryn.jalli@cambridge.gov.uk</a></p>