

**CABINET – 16TH SEPTEMBER 2016****SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME****REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) and to highlight implications for the County Council.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:

- a) The arrangements put in place by the County Council and partners to support the arrival of Syrian refugees be noted;
- b) The issues highlighted in paragraphs 24 to 32 of the report regarding the allocation of Government funding to support Syrian refugee arrivals and governance arrangements for the scheme be noted;
- c) The Chief Executive write to Charnwood Borough Council to express the Council's concern as set out in paragraphs 24 to 32 of the report.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. To ensure that the Cabinet is aware of the latest position regarding the SVPRS, and to seek to ensure the Scheme is appropriately governed and deploys Government funding in line with Government guidance and the support needs of refugee households.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

4. There is no specific deadline but early resolution of the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding will facilitate appropriate deployment of available funding and assist the provision of appropriate services to refugee families.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

5. A report advising the Cabinet about the Government's SVPRS and the previous Prime Minister's Statement concerning Syrian refugees was considered as an urgent item at the meeting of the Cabinet on 11th September 2015.
6. At that meeting the Cabinet:
 - a) Noted the then Prime Minister's statement that the Government wished to work intensively with local authorities to put in place arrangements to house and support up to 20,000 Syrian Refugees over the life of the Parliament and that the SVPR scheme was to be significantly expanded.
 - b) Noted the support provided at the time of the report by the County Council, to refugees and asylum seekers (particularly unaccompanied minors).
 - c) Noted that an interdepartmental officer group had been established to assess the implications for the County Council of the then Prime Minister's statement and consequent Government announcement, and to engage with partners in regard to the local and regional response.
 - d) Agreed that the County Council would respond to any requirements and demands placed upon it to assist refugees as helpfully and positively as it can whilst recognising that its capacity to assist would inevitably be governed by available resources.
 - e) Agreed that the County Council would support the Local Government Association in its discussions with the Government to ensure that funding for the expanded SVPR Scheme is sufficient and sustainable in order to minimise the financial and other resource pressures on local authorities.

Resource Implications

7. Refugee households arriving in the county will require support from a range of services, including those provided by the County Council. As set out in Part B of this report below the Government is making funding available to local areas which will help cover these costs. It will be important that the funding is deployed in a manner which most effectively meets the needs of refugee households, and is consistent with Government guidance. There are concerns, also detailed below, as to how Charnwood Borough Council (which is acting as lead authority for the scheme) may be proposing to deal with social care costs incurred by the County Council in support of resettled Syrian refugee households.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

8. None.

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Part B

Background

9. The Government has resolved to resettle up to 20,000 Syrian refugees in the UK by the end of this Parliament, under its Syrian Vulnerable Persons Refugee Scheme (SVPRS).
10. The primary purpose is to resettle 20,000 vulnerable Syrian persons from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in a way that ensures national security and public protection, has the wellbeing of the vulnerable persons and welcoming communities at the centre of decision making, and delivers value for money for the UK taxpayer.
11. The Programme is run in partnership with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and is intended to demonstrate the UK's support for the UNHCR's global effort to relieve the humanitarian crisis through the provision of resettlement opportunities for some of the most vulnerable Syrian people into communities over the life of the current Parliament.
12. The beneficiaries of the scheme must have registered with the UNHCR in Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and other countries across the MENA region as a result of the current crisis and the UNHCR must consider them to meet one of their seven vulnerability criteria to be eligible for the Scheme.
13. The seven vulnerability criteria are:
 - Women and girls at risk
 - Survivors of violence and torture
 - Refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs
 - Refugees with medical needs or disabilities
 - Children and adolescents at risk
 - Persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity
 - Refugees with family links in resettlement countries.
14. A report advising the Cabinet about the SVPRS and the then Prime Minister's Statement concerning Syrian refugees was considered by the Cabinet on 11th September 2015.
15. The SVPRS is a separate scheme to the new duty concerning transferring in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) which was reported to the Cabinet at its meeting on 18th June 2016.

National SVRPS Funding

16. As referred to above, national funding support is being provided by Government for 12 months with guidance also provided setting out payment rates for each individual arriving.

17. The guidance is set out in a 'funding instruction' for the SVPRS issued by the Home Office, Department for Communities and Local Government and Department for International Development in March 2016. It is attached as the Appendix to this report. This document sets out the terms under which the Home Office will make funding available to participating local authorities in respect of expenditure incurred supporting eligible resettled persons brought to the UK under the SVPRS for the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017.
18. The following table summarises payment rates which are separated into local authority costs and education costs.

UNIT COSTS FOR SYRIAN VPR SCHEME* - LOCAL AUTHORITIES					
	Adult Benefit Claimant	Other Adults	Children 5-18	Children 3-4	Children U-3
Local authority costs	£8520	£8520	£8520	£8520	£8520
Education	£0	£0	£4500	£2250	£0
TOTALS	£8520	£8520	£13020	£10770	£8520

19. The 'funding instruction' states that the funding is provided 'to support eligible Syrians for the first 12-months after their arrival in the UK through the provision of initial reception arrangements, and access to accommodation, casework support, education (incl. language skills), health care, and social care'.
20. Payments for Education will be transferred to the County Council for forwarding to education providers as appropriate, and it is stated that 'additional payments may also be made in order to cover necessary costs of social care, where compelling circumstances exist'. These will be assessed and made on a case by case basis.

The position in Leicestershire

21. Leicestershire district councils, Rutland Council and Leicestershire County Council are working with other agencies including the Police and the Department of Work and Pensions, preparing to help, house and support approximately 250 Syrian refugees over the next five years under the Scheme.
22. Two families arrived in late August and have been housed by Charnwood Borough Council. Further families are due to arrive in November and then March and will be housed by the other Leicestershire district councils (with the exception of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council) and Rutland Council. At this stage, the local offer is to take families in the lowest category of need; however these

households may still have significant support requirements, including from County Council services.

23. Charnwood Borough Council is leading the scheme in Leicestershire and Rutland and has employed a SVPR Scheme Co-ordinator. Charnwood Borough Council has co-ordinated the securing of properties and the procuring of support services for resettled families on behalf of all the district councils and Rutland Council. The County Council is actively liaising with the Scheme Co-ordinator on the provision of relevant services, including providing advice on accessing school places, and social care support.
24. A sub-regional steering group (covering Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland) is in place to help co-ordinate resettlement. For resettlement in Leicestershire and Rutland it is understood that the Chief Housing Officers' Group (made up of Heads of Housing of the local housing authorities) is being used as the governance group for the scheme. This was decided without any discussion with the County Council which is not represented on this group or been invited to any of its meetings which have considered the SVPRS.
25. In July 2016 the County Council was asked by Charnwood Borough Council to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the scheme which would also be signed by the other participating district councils and Rutland Council. The drafted MoU raised a number of concerns, particularly the approach taken to the funding of social care costs which appeared to be inconsistent with Government guidance.
26. On 12th August 2016 the County Council requested via Charnwood Borough Council that the draft MoU be amended accordingly. At the time of writing no response has been received addressing the concerns that have been raised by the County Council with regards to social care costs and it now appears that a decision has been taken, without the County Council's input or agreement, that the MoU will be agreed without the County Council being a signatory. A separate MoU will, it is understood, be prepared by District Housing Officers for the County Council to sign, but a copy of this has not yet been shared with the Council. Clearly, the County Council needs to have input to any such document from the start.

Implications for Leicestershire County Council

Social Care

27. Whilst only refugee households in the lowest category need are being received by Leicestershire district councils at the current time, these households may still have significant social care support needs. Some of these needs may not immediately be apparent. The Government guidance in the Funding Instruction (appended) makes it clear that social care costs are a legitimate use for the national funding being made available to support resettlement.
28. In relation to social care support costs the MoU (which the County Council was invited to sign) stated that the County Council (and Rutland Council) would fund these costs. In commenting on the draft MoU the Council asked that this section

be amended to bring it in line with Government guidance thereby ensuring that the national funding would be used to cover these costs. The SVPRS Co-ordinator, hosted at Charnwood Borough Council, on taking advice from the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership, confirmed that social care costs can be met from the Government funding allocated per resettled person.

29. The County Council has yet to see a draft agreement prepared by Charnwood/the district councils on meeting social care costs – and there are obvious concerns about this action. In any event it is the case that considerable uncertainty remains about the preparedness of Charnwood Borough Council/the district councils to make available any of the national funding to cover social care costs incurred by the County Council.

Governance of the SVPRS

30. A further concern regarding the original MoU relates to the governance of the SVPRS. The MoU states that the Chief Housing Officers' Group will act as the governance group. This does not include a representative of the County Council and is not considered the ideal body to oversee a scheme which involves the provision of support extending beyond housing. At the time of writing, no response has been received from Charnwood Borough Council to address this concern and the County Council has not been invited to attend any meetings of the Group at which the SVPRS has been discussed. The County Council also wishes for the roles of elected members to be recognised in the governance of the SVPRS.

Education

31. The schools in the local area, including the catchment school for the residences of the initial two families, are academies. The County Council is seeking to influence local schools to make provision for resettled children. At this juncture, the head teachers of the potential schools wish to meet with the SVPRS Co-ordinator in order to gain a better understanding of the needs and language requirements of the children.

Other

32. Charnwood Borough Council has been requested to ensure that costs incurred in relation to resettled households are closely tracked and monitored to ensure that appropriate reimbursement can be made. A response to this is also awaited.

Background Papers

Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme - Guidance for local authorities and partners
<http://ow.ly/2G1u303Ydns>

Report to the Cabinet on 11th September 2015 "Refugees - The Prime Minister's Statement of 7th September 2015 and the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme" and minutes of that meeting

<http://ow.ly/3C4S303YdrA>
<http://ow.ly/eDPH303YdAH>

Appendix

Funding to local authorities Year 1 Financial Year 2016/2017 Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP)

Equality and Human Rights Implications

33. The County Council is committed to promoting equality and human rights. Responding positively to the humanitarian crisis in Syria is consistent with this commitment.
34. Beneficiaries of the scheme will access County Council services using the same processes as other residents accessing the same services. To mitigate the possible negative impact of language and cultural barriers, the beneficiaries will have the support of a keyworker in making referrals for any appropriate support. The beneficiaries will have English language tuition (ESOL or equivalent) to be able to carry out basic transactions within the communities within which they have been placed, should they require it, and interpretation services will be available throughout the period of resettlement.
35. These mitigations are to be coordinated by Charnwood Borough Council and this level of case work support is a requirement of the scheme. Contact has been made with Charnwood Borough Council to establish whether they have completed an Equality Impact Assessment, as the lead on the scheme. The SVPR Scheme Co-ordinator has agreed to contact the Home Office to establish whether an impact assessment has been completed on the whole scheme. The County Council services that are likely to be accessed will have been subject to an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment previously to ensure that there is not a disproportionately adverse impact on any persons with protected characteristics.