

URGENCY ITEMS - MINUTE OF DECISION

Delegation arrangements for dealing with matters of urgency

Paragraph 7.2.1 of the Council's Constitution provides that Chief Officers may take urgent decisions if they are of the opinion that circumstances exist which make it necessary for action to be taken by the Council prior to the time when such action could be approved through normal Council Procedures. They shall, where practicable, first consult with the Leader and Chairman (or in their absence the Vice-Chairman) and the Opposition Spokesperson of the appropriate committee.

Subject: Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) Relocation Scheme – June 2021

Appropriate Committee: Homes and Communities

Details of Item

This urgency item is required to secure delegated approval for the Council to accommodate two families in NSDC under the above scheme in order to meet the tight timescales that have been presented within the programme.

On 3rd June 2021, The Home Office and Ministry of Defence wrote to all local authority leaders seeking support for the accelerated Afghan LES scheme. The intention is to resettle those who supported us in Afghanistan and are now at increased risk as NATO forces withdraw. The details of the request for support require that for the first four months, until benefits are in payment, participating LAs will be required to provide:-

- Welcome at airport and onward escort
- Accommodation
- Advice and assistance package (employment, welfare, housing, health, etc)
- Registration with GP and Job Centre, including National Insurance Number
- Support with school admissions
- Cash support

Local authorities will be provided with a 12 month funding package for beneficiary families through a Grant funding arrangement; this will include a budget for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) tuition.

Based on previous refugee resettlement work, there are capacities within current internal services, external partnerships and wider networks to carry out this work. Newark and Sherwood District Council's lead on refugee resettlement will work with Nottingham City Council to deliver this as per the successful Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. NCC currently provides resettlement support to four Notts district and borough authorities (Gedling, Broxtowe, Newark & Sherwood, Rushcliffe) and manages the budget and case working contract on our behalf and we recommend using this existing partnership to deliver the LES rather than design something new.

In consideration of lost grant funding arising from suspension of arrivals under resettlement schemes, undertaking this work may provide some budget resilience to enable retention of staff experience and partner capacity for future resettlement work.

Arrivals are due to begin 22nd June 2021. There is currently no cut-off date to the scheme, but intent is to resettle the majority by September 2021, using temporary accommodation as a stop-gap.

NSDC is confident of resource to make a pledge for two families to be accommodated in NSDC under this scheme and are currently seeking properties (including one property from NSDC stock) to fulfil this. This would be achievable in place of the delayed VPR arrivals, and would be kept under review.

Equalities Implications

There are no adverse equalities implications in connection with this proposal. Participation in the Afghan LES scheme (and refugee resettlement more generally) advances the equality of opportunity for people of different races and religious beliefs. This work is carried out without detrimental effect on existing groups within our community.

Financial Implications FIN21-22/8170

The work is grant-funded by the MOD, and can be completed without additional cost to the Council. However, there are some initial concerns over levels of funding for the set-up of accommodation and these queries currently sit with Home Office around ability to work flexibly within the grant envelope.

Decision

That the Director – Housing, Health and Wellbeing be granted delegated approval to progress the proposal to accommodate two families in NSDC under the above scheme.

Reason for Decision

To enable the process of securing accommodation to proceed without delay.

Members Consulted:

Cllr. David Lloyd – Leader of the Council and Chairman of Policy and Finance

Cllr. Tim Wendels – Chairman of Homes and Communities

Cllr. Kathleen Arnold – Opposition Spokesperson Homes and Communities

All members consulted on 24th June 2021, urgency item emailed and follow up telephone call or voice mail message left.

Signed 

Date 24th June 2021

Director – Housing, Health and Wellbeing