

Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 4 June 2024
 Portfolio Holder: Councillor Lee Brazier, Housing
 Director Lead: Suzanne Shead, Director - Housing, Health & Wellbeing
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Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open report, non-key decision
Report Title	Homes for Ukraine and Local Authority Housing Fund Update
Purpose of Report	To provide an update on the Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme and to provide an overview of the achievements of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF).
Recommendations	That Cabinet note the content of the report and the achievements highlighted.
Alternative Options Considered	This report is for noting only.
Reason for Recommendations	<p>This is an update report displaying the outcomes that have been achieved as part of this delivery programme.</p> <p>Aligning to 24/27 Community Plan objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the supply, choice, and standard of housing. • Raise peoples’ skills levels and create employment opportunities for the to fulfil their potential. • To be a top performing, modern and accessible Council.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In March 2022 the Government made the commitment to support those leaving Ukraine due to the conflict that had arisen. As part of this support, they introduced the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and Newark & Sherwood District Council (NSDC) in conjunction with Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) delivered and continue to deliver hosted placements for those entering the UK under this programme.
- 1.2 Since the scheme commenced NSDC has assisted 181 individuals/groups into hosted placements and currently there are 41 still in placement and 4 new arrivals expected shortly.

- 1.3 When the scheme was introduced the initial work and emergency placements were dealt with by the Council as a humanitarian response via the Community Engagement team. As time passed and it became apparent that this assistance was required longer term, the Council chose to develop a tenancy support worker model for future delivery of the programme and created a resettlement team.
- 1.4 The team consists of a Resettlement Coordinator, who deals with all elements of the Council resettlement programme, two - two year fixed term Tenancy Support Workers, who assess and secure the host placement, provide support, advice and assistance to enable the individual/family settle into the UK and when appropriate, help them to secure move on accommodation, there is also an Assistant Community Development Officer, providing administration support to the team. These posts have been funded by Government funding via NCC for our HFU delivery model.
- 1.5 This scheme is delivered by local housing authorities all across the UK and has assisted over 143,000 people but as might be expected, when placement cease or breakdown this places significant pressures on local homelessness services. To help address this, the Government launched the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) programme on 14 December 2022 via a prospectus, Newark & Sherwood were listed in the first round of local housing authorities encouraged to consider applying for the targeted funding through a Memorandum of Understanding.
- 1.6 Each local housing authority listed in the report was given a suggested number of units to deliver and there was a requirement for some capital contributions to be made in addition to the grant funding for wider scheme delivery. The Council took the decision to progress and secured grant funding to enable the delivery of 14 homes with match funding from the Council.

2.0 Progress Update

- 2.1 The funding was phased as the grant required targets to be met before the next phase of funding was to be released. There was also a requirement for the grant phases to be spent by November 2023.
- 2.2 There was a maximum grant payable, so finance colleagues helped to ensure that the property purchase prices maximised our grant contribution, up to the 40% ceiling. In Q4 of 2022/23 the Council received £366,557 and the table below show the budget spent on purchasing properties.

- 2.3 The Council researched how best to spend the funding and devised a criteria to shortlist suitable properties. This resulted in purchases being made from the private market in the west of the district rather than undertaking acquisitions or build programmes due to the tight timescales and property prices. In addition to the purchase price of each property, the Government provided £20,000 revenue funding to complete any required works to bring the homes up to decent homes and the Council's own fit to let standard.

Homes for Ukraine				
Property Types	Purchase Price	Fees	Works	Total
Main Element	£ 157,500.00	£ 6,933.95	£ 7,769.32	£ 172,203.27
3 - 2 Bedroom Houses	£ 174,000.00	£ 8,202.00	£ 9,077.67	£ 191,279.67
1 - 4 Bedroom House	£ 155,000.00	£ 7,484.25	£ 20,796.37	£ 183,280.62
9 - 3 Bedroom Houses	£ 160,000.00	£ 8,378.25	£ 12,553.52	£ 180,931.77
	£ 160,000.00	£ 5,565.00	£ 4,456.90	£ 170,021.90
	£ 199,950.00	£ 9,317.00	£ 15,613.51	£ 224,880.51
	£ 170,000.00	£ 6,122.02	£ 2,172.00	£ 178,294.02
	£ 192,000.00	£ 6,853.00	£ 4,182.42	£ 203,035.42
	£ 168,000.00	£ 5,865.00	£ 37,500.00	£ 211,365.00
	£ 162,000.00	£ 6,538.00	£ 24,506.28	£ 193,044.28
	£ 160,000.00	£ 5,673.00	£ 2,237.50	£ 167,910.50
	£ 180,000.00	£ 6,165.00	£ 2,338.92	£ 188,503.92
	£ 160,000.00	£ 5,565.00	£ 1,740.00	£ 167,305.00
	£ 2,198,450.00	£ 88,661.47	£ 144,944.41	£ 2,432,055.88
	Main Budget	Remaining		
	£ 2,600,000.00	£ 401,550.00		
	£ 260,000.00	£ 26,394.12		
Bridging Accommodation				
	Purchase Price	Fees	Works	Total
1 - 4 Bedroom House	£ 180,000.00	£ 8,783.80	£ 11,021.67	£ 199,805.47
	Budget	Remaining		
	£ 250,000.00	£ 70,000.00		
	£ 20,000.00	£ 194.53		

- 2.4 Part of the grant conditions was that 13 homes should assist with addressing homelessness pressures with our HFU caseload, in the first instance and one property to be provided as 'bridging accommodation'. This bridging accommodation had to have at least 4 bedrooms and had to be made available for those exiting the bridging hotel placements for Afghan refugees.
- 2.5 The team were successful in securing the purchase of all 14 properties, this was achieved within the prescribed timeline and maximised grant contribution.
- 2.6 The team were supported by Corporate Property colleagues in the purchasing and works programmes and whilst they were securing the accommodation, the resettlement team were working on preventing imminent homelessness from the HFU cases by negotiating and extending host placements until such time as a property from the LAHF portfolio could be made available.
- 2.7 Currently, of the 14 properties purchased, 12 are occupied (inc 2 households who are awaiting visa assessments to enter the UK), 1 are in works, 1 is being used to support with a potential homeless case.
- 2.8 Prior to the securing of this property, in an email received from this family they stated 'I have been given your contact details by Ukrainian friends. Newark area and your service has a good reputation. I wonder if you can help me' which shows the Council's strong reputation as a welcoming and supportive district.

2.9 In addition to the work undertaken by the teams the LAHF programme has been included in an audit assessment for 2023-24 where it received substantial assurance from the Auditors.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment below where appropriate.

3.1 Financial Implications (FIN24-25/1978)

3.1.1 Homes for Ukraine Revenue

In terms of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, provision has been made within revenue budgets to cover the costs of staffing, repairs & maintenance and miscellaneous expenses. All expenditure budgets are fully funded by a mix of payments from other authorities and housing rents. Budgets, in the current year and future years are profiled as below:

Budget	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£	£	£	£
Salaries	164,110	172,550	181,480	190,760
Repairs and Maintenance	25,000	25,750	26,260	26,790
Contributions to Repairs and Renewals	25,000	25,750	26,260	26,790
Miscellaneous Expenses	25,000	25,750	26,520	27,320
Payments Other Authorities	-189,110	-198,300	-208,000	-218,080
Housing Rents	-50,000	-51,500	-52,520	-53,580
	0	0	0	0

As these budgets are partly-funded via external contributions from NCC, should this funding change or cease, revenue budget would need to be identified to support delivery of the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

There is a revenue reserve in place for the Homes for Ukraine scheme, with a balance of funds received from DLUHC and NCC, at the end of 2023/24, of approximately £353,300.00. Should current funding arrangements change at some point in the future, it would need to be assessed to what extent any future balance on this reserve could be used to fund the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Otherwise, revenue budget would need to be identified.

3.1.2 LAHF Capital Programme

The Capital Programme budget for LAHF is as follows:

	Homes for Ukraine Original Budget	Homes for Ukraine Revised Budget	Bridging Accommodation Original Budget	Bridging Accommodation Revised Budget
Capital Budget	2,860,000	2,460,000	270,000	200,000
<i>Financed by:</i>				
Grant	1,416,957	1,050,400	171,457	171,457
Borrowing	1,443,043	1,409,600	98,543	28,543
<i>MRP Charge</i>	<i>28,860</i>	<i>20,860</i>	<i>1,970</i>	<i>570</i>

Actual spend in 2023/24 for Homes for Ukraine is £2,217,555.49, with £242,444 due to be carried forward into 2024/25 to finish the scheme. The spend on the Bridging accommodation is £214,003.67 and the scheme is now complete.

The full £1,588,414 grant funding has been received.

The MRP budget included in the MTFP is based on the original budget therefore there will be a reduction in the actual charge even with the actual spend on the Bridging accommodation being more than the current revised budget.

This project has delivered on time, within budget and maximised the grant contribution received and going forward it is anticipated that future implications will be limited. The delivery of a tenancy support worker model alongside the LAHF programme has reduced the risk of homelessness services being overrun and has diminished the risk of significant bed and breakfast spend and placements that many of our county colleagues have experienced without these services in situ.

When the government introduced the wider HFU scheme they did not put a timescale on the expected delivery and whilst this has not changed there are some indications from the government office that they will be making amendments to the ongoing delivery of HFU. The team will continue to monitor this and will report any changes that cause an affect for the council.

In terms of the LAHF accommodation, the government linked the procurement and usage of this accommodation to homelessness pressures and in the guidance documents they created it stated that preference should be given to using the accommodation to address HFU homelessness pressures. However, it anticipated that in years to come, this pressure might reduce and therefore the guidance also gave local housing authorities the right to use the LAHF accommodation to address general homelessness pressures, not just HFU.

At present, the accommodation is being used to minimise homelessness pressures and accommodates the target group but this may not always be possible. Therefore, the team have begun examining the possibility of using the LAHF accommodation to meet general temporary accommodation pressures in the west of the district instead of using the fixed site or bed and breakfast. The work on this continues and should it identify any implications, these too will be reported.

3.2 ICT Implications

Case management for the HFU group are held within the Meritec system and does not have any additional implications.

3.3 Equalities Implications

Whilst there are no implications resulting from this report, this update shows the Council's commitment to supporting people into safe accommodation and the flexibility of our services to respond quickly and empathetically in challenging situations.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None