

## **HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Report To:** Cabinet  
5 June 2018

**Subject:** ASYLUM SEEKER DISPERSAL

**All Wards**  
**Portfolio Holder for Planning: Councillor D A Webster**

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### **1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND:**

- 1.1 The Home Office has written to the Chief Executives of all North Yorkshire Local Authorities seeking agreement to participate in the national Asylum Dispersal Scheme as part of a national push to widen dispersal. This request is not to be confused with the Government's programme for resettlement of Syrian Refugees, who are not classed as 'asylum seekers' and for whom completely separate arrangements have been made.
- 1.2 An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded. Home Office statistics indicate that there were 33,000 asylum seekers who were awaiting a decision on their status by the Home Office by the end of 2016. During this application assessment period, asylum seekers cannot work, they have no access to public sector housing and social security support. Those asylum seekers who are deemed to be 'destitute' are provided with both accommodation and a small weekly living allowance by the Home Office.
- 1.3 Ten local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber region (including all in West and South Yorkshire plus Hull City Council) currently act as 'asylum dispersal areas' and ninety across the UK. The Yorkshire and Humber scheme was contracted out to G4S in 2012 and runs until 2019. Under these contracting arrangements the role of the participating authority within the actual dispersal process is limited.
- 1.4 On arrival asylum seekers are placed in short-term hostel accommodation, staying on average around three weeks and the Home Office vet and check their credentials during this period. Those who are deemed to be destitute are then provided with 'dispersal' accommodation and or/subsistence support. G4S is contracted by the Home Office to identify suitable accommodation within the agreed dispersal area. Accommodation is most likely to be leased from private sector landlords and is often in the form of a House in Multiple Occupation.
- 1.5 The asylum seeker remains in the accommodation whilst their application is considered (usually about six months). During this period they receive a weekly allowance to support their needs. If successful, the asylum seeker will be granted refugee status and then have the same rights as UK citizens. The provision of accommodation by G4S is ended and they are referred to the Local Housing authority under the homelessness legislation for accommodation.
- 1.6 If unsuccessful, the asylum seekers generally enter an appeal process which may last a further eighteen months, during which time they remain under the control of G4S and continue to receive financial and other relevant support. If the appeal process is unsuccessful the asylum seeker will be asked to leave the UK. They are evicted from the dispersal accommodation and have no recourse to public funds or housing from that date.

## **2.0 HOME OFFICE REQUEST TO PARTICIPATE:**

- 2.1 A request has been made to every local authority within North Yorkshire to agree to participate as a 'dispersal area'. In practical terms this means giving consent for G4S to explore potential opportunities to acquire or lease suitable accommodation to be used as dispersal accommodation. Whilst this is currently a request, it should be noted that the Secretary of State has the power to 'instruct co-operation and support' from local authorities.
- 2.2 Although there is the potential threat of future imposition, regardless of the wishes of North Yorkshire Councils, the Home Office has indicated a willingness to enter into negotiations which would be based on the proposal set out in Annex A to this report.
- 2.3 All the North Yorkshire local authorities, upper and lower tier, have participated in discussions which have culminated in a proposal which each local authority is now being asked to consider. Progress on these negotiations was considered by the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Housing Board on 23 April 2018. The Board agreed 'in principle' to the proposal as negotiated subject to agreement from each district or borough.
- 2.4 Details of this proposal are set out at Annex A, the key elements include:
- the total number of asylum seekers accepted will not exceed 50 across North Yorkshire within an initial 2 year period;
  - of the 50 individuals accepted in this period, no more than 20 will be placed in any single district/borough;
  - G4S (and any future contractors) will only use properties that have been individually and specifically agreed in advance as suitable in writing by the relevant District Council and County Council - there can be no exceptions to this commitment.
- 2.5 The proposal will not be binding to any local authority which has explicitly opted out of participation in the dispersal scheme. Where this is the case any subsequent local agreement or otherwise will be a matter for the relevant District Council and North Yorkshire County Council with the Housing Partnership taking no further part.

## **3.0 LINK TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES:**

- 3.1 The proposal does not relate to a Council priority but is a response to a global humanitarian crisis.

## **4.0 RISK ASSESSMENT:**

- 4.1 The key risk in approving the recommendation is set out below:

Risk	Implication	Prob*	Imp*	Total	Preventative action
The Council agrees to participate and all 20 individuals are dispersed to Hambleton	Cost implications and staff time.	3	4	12	The draft proposal places a 20 person cap on the numbers placed in any one district - request that the cap is lowered.

4.2 The risk in not approving the recommendation is set out below:

Risk	Implication	Prob*	Imp*	Total	Preventative action
The Council does not agree to participate and the Secretary of State may impose dispersal	The Council may lose some of the mitigation and control that has been negotiated e.g. on the 20 individual cap.	4	4	16	Agree to participate

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- 5.1 No funding is provided from the Government to Councils to cover any costs associated with asylum seekers.
- 5.2 There are no direct financial implications for the Council that arise at this stage from the proposed scheme. There will however, be indirect cost implications for the Council including staff time alongside potential costs associated with provision of temporary accommodation and homelessness. These costs are not covered by the Government and are difficult to estimate but could be in the region of £4,000 for each asylum seeker who goes through the homelessness process.
- 5.3 If the Council is minded to approve this scheme, the homelessness budget will be closely monitored during 2018/19 and any required cost changes will be reported at the earliest opportunity as part of the quarterly revenue monitoring process.

## **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

## **7.0 EQUALITY/DIVERSITY ISSUES:**

- 7.1 A key element of the local response will be to work in partnership to tackle equality and diversity issues.

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATION:**

- 8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet supports and participates in the North Yorkshire Asylum Seekers Dispersal scheme subject to the conditions set out in Annex A of this report.

HELEN KEMP  
DIRECTOR OF ECONOMY AND PLANNING

**Background papers:** None  
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## Asylum Dispersal Scheme Proposal for North Yorkshire

### General conditions

The York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Housing Board will agree to participate in the Asylum Dispersal Scheme subject to the following conditions:

- Asylum seekers in North Yorkshire will not commence until the arrangements for the maximum numbers, support, liaison and management have been agreed in writing with the Partnership.
- No changes will be made to the arrangements for the maximum numbers support, liaison and management without prior agreement in writing from the Housing Partnership.
- G4S (and any future contractors) will only use properties that have been individually and specifically agreed in advance as suitable in writing by both the relevant District Council and North Yorkshire County Council - there can be no exceptions to this commitment.
- Prior to agreement being given by the local authorities:
- G4S (and any future contractor) will give the full postal address of the proposed properties and details of how the said properties will be used (e.g. families/single people, maximum number etc).
- The relevant District Council and North Yorkshire County Council will consider issues such as availability of school places, impact on the local schools, community tensions, access via a safe and reasonable walk to essential service (e.g. food shops, GP, schools) and public transport that will enable people to reasonably get to Leeds for asylum interviews.
- G4S (and any future contractors) will comply with the 'bedroom standard' – a separate bedroom shall be allocated to the following persons:
  - a) A person living together as a husband and wife or civil partners (whether that person is of the same sex or the opposite sex).
  - b) A person aged 18 years or more.
  - c) Two persons of the same age aged 10 years to 17 years.
  - d) Two persons (whether of the same sex or not) aged less than 10 years.
  - e) Two persons of the same sex where one person is between 10 years and 17 years and the other is aged less than 10 years.
  - f) Any person aged under 17 years in any case where he or she cannot be paired with another occupier of the dwelling so as to fall within c), d) or e) above.
- Families and single people are not placed in the same block of flats.

### Conditions- scale and management

The following conditions will apply:

- The total number of asylum seekers accepted under this proposal will not exceed 50 throughout North Yorkshire within an initial 2 year period.
- Of the 50 individuals accepted within this period, no more than 20 asylum seekers will be placed in any single district/borough.
- After the 2 year period has elapsed under this agreement, it will be reviewed by the Housing Partnership but no further commitments can be made in this respect.
- Taking into account conditions specified in paragraph 1.4, each individual District/ Borough Council and the County Council will specify the type of placements which will be acceptable given local conditions- singles or families or both - and this will be strictly adhered to by G4S (or a future contractor).

- Prior to any placements G4S (or a future contractor ) will confirm in writing to the relevant District/Borough Council and the County Council clear and robust management /support arrangements including as a minimum:
  - a) 1 locally based support worker (within 40 miles of the placement town/settlement) per 50 asylum seekers.
  - b) Contact details for the support worker/s and co-ordinating manager.
  - c) Specified response times - not exceeding 12 working hours.
  - d) Provision of out of hours/emergency service.
  - e) As a minimum, 1 liaison meeting per week between the co-ordinating manager and the nominated District/Borough Council and County Council representative/s.