

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report To: Cabinet
15 March 2016

Subject: **RESETTLEMENT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES**

**All Wards outside the North Yorkshire Moors National Park
Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Planning Services: Councillor B Phillips**

1.0 PURPOSE:

1.1 In September the Home Office wrote to all Local Authorities seeking their assistance to support the Government's pledge to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees within the UK over the next 5 years. This report seeks agreement to support this request through the Council's participation in a North Yorkshire Resettlement Scheme.

2.0 BACKGROUND:

2.1 The Prime Minister announced in September 2015 that during the remainder of this Parliament, the UK will accept up to 20,000 Syrian refugees from camps in countries neighbouring Syria. The Government is working with the United Nations Refugee Agency to identify who will enter the UK. Those who are accepted are being granted a five year humanitarian protection visa. On arrival they will have the same rights as UK citizens to education, employment, health care and public funds. It is understood from the Home Office that those chosen will be amongst the most vulnerable and will be predominantly families.

2.2 The Home Office pays a grant per person to Local Authorities accepting refugees which is expected to cover the full costs of resettlement for each individual. Levels of year 1 funding have been confirmed as £8,520 per person. Local Authority costs cover management of the scheme, housing and cultural integration including English language support. There is also an element included in the Local Authority costs for social care (in the region of £500). Any cases where social care costs cannot be accommodated within this figure would need to be topped up separately by making a case to the Home Office. Additional grant funding to that above is being paid to cover educational costs and special educational needs costs.

2.3 Other costs will be paid directly to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for welfare benefits costs and to NHS England/Clinical Commissioning Groups for primary and secondary medical care costs.

2.4 The Home Office has confirmed that in years two to five funding will be allocated on a tariff basis over four years, tapering from £5,000 per person in year two to £1,000 per person in year five.

North Yorkshire Scheme

2.5 The Council has worked in partnership with the other North Yorkshire Councils to develop a joint response to the Government's requests. Each Local Authority in North Yorkshire has identified the number of refugees that it could resettle based on local circumstances, housing capacity and school places. The combined estimate is in the region of 200 individuals across the County. This figure also equates to North Yorkshire's pro-rata contribution to the national scheme based on population size. For Hambleton the figure is 28.

- 2.6 The experience of Authorities already participating in the scheme is that the support needs of refugees are intensive especially early on. The rapid deployment of a range of services is required locally in order to ensure that refugees are provided with the right level of support. This involves housing, social care, education, health services, the DWP, Job Centre Plus and Police working closely together. A challenge for all North Yorkshire Authorities is that the County currently lacks much of the support infrastructure needed to take such a scheme forward. This combined with the rural nature means that realism is needed about numbers and where and how quickly we could resettle refugees.
- 2.7 The proposed approach is to pilot resettlement in one area of the County. This will work in year 1 by resettling refugees in a combined 'block' of two districts. Such an approach would make it easier to manage the process and build up expertise and focus specialist services over a more manageable geographical area. A review of the process could then take place before additional refugees were resettled in other parts of the County. In year 1 the focus will be on Harrogate and Craven with Scarborough and Ryedale falling into year 2 and Hambleton and Richmondshire in year 3. This means that it is unlikely that refugees would be resettled in Hambleton until 2018/19.
- 2.8 The Council's contribution would be through the sourcing of accommodation. This could either be through the Private Rented Sector or through Social Housing Provision. It is anticipated that housing costs will be about £2,500 per household per annum. These costs will be paid for through the Government grant.
- 2.9 In Hambleton it is proposed to use social housing because the Council is not in a position to 'guarantee' that suitable private rented accommodation will be readily available when required and is therefore reliant on exercising its nomination rights with Registered Providers as its only option. Discussions have been held with Broadacres which has committed to supporting these proposals. Lettings to refugees would have to be undertaken outside the scope of the Council's normal allocation scheme via a 'direct nomination'. This approach requires an amendment to the nomination deed between the Council and Broadacres Housing Association.

Governance Arrangements

- 2.10 In common with the arrangements already in place in other areas of the country, a Programme Board would oversee the strategic arrangements for North Yorkshire's participation in the scheme. This would be at County level and would include Housing Officers from each of the District Councils together with representatives of the County Council, primary and secondary care health services and the Police. The Board's functions will be:
- to determine suitable areas within North Yorkshire for the resettlement of Syrian refugees;
 - to ensure smooth arrangements are in place for the arrival of Syrian refugees;
 - to oversee the development of appropriate integration support services for refugees;
 - to consider issues relating to the support of the Syrian refugees that cannot be resolved at an operational level and to make recommendations to the appropriate organisation;
 - to agree key messages including how the public can help; and
 - to report on progress to Local Government York and North Yorkshire.

- 2.11 For day-to-day management of the process at the local level an operational group covering the area in which the resettlement is taking place will be created. The purpose of this group will be to help co-ordinate the response of support services. A Project Co-ordinator would lead delivery and chair the operational group. The County Council is offering to provide in-house project management to co-ordinate the project overall, including employing the Project Co-ordinator and to act as the accountable body.

Commissioning External Specialist Support

- 2.12 Some of the requirements of refugees will be complex and staff will require support from specialist organisations. Specialist integration support organisations already operate in other areas within Yorkshire and provide expertise to train staff, guide partners through the resettlement process and provide an understanding of Syrian culture. It is therefore proposed that a specialist provider be commissioned by NYCC.

Proposed Support in Yorkshire and Humber

- 2.13 The model being proposed involves Migration Yorkshire project managing the resettlement programme at regional level to provide leadership and co-ordination and provide the link between Local Authorities and the Home Office. It would act as a single point through which to route and agree caseloads for our region and be responsible for contract management and compliance with Home Office requirements. Migration Yorkshire would also manage practical aspects such as arrivals (e.g. planning intake and charter flights to each region). Local delivery, including decisions relating to the number of refugees to be resettled within an area and when, would be managed at a local level by Local Authorities.
- 2.14 It is therefore proposed that the Council along with other North Yorkshire Authorities agrees to participate within the wider Regional model and enter into partnership with Migration Yorkshire. There are no cost implications to the Council as it is anticipated that some or all of the regional function would be funded initially by the Home Office. If this was not possible estimated overheads to the Local Authorities for a regional management function would be between 3 - 5% of the funding provided to Local Authorities by the Home Office.

Memorandum of Understanding

- 2.15 The complex nature of the resettlement process means that all partners need to be clear about their responsibilities and committed to carrying these out in a timely manner. A Memorandum of Understanding has therefore been developed and is attached at Annex 'A'.

3.0 LINK TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES:

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

4.0 RISK ASSESSMENT:

4.1 The main risk in approving the recommendation is:

Risk	Implication	Prob*	Imp*	Total	Preventative action
Earmarked housing remains vacant for an extended period should a family not want to come to Hambleton.	The scheme currently will pay for an 8 week void period. If this needs to be extended the Council will need to pay for the extra void period time.	4	3	12	Consider offering the property to another homeless client to avoid further void costs and/or have two families in mind so that the second one can be accommodated quite quickly thereafter thus reducing void loss/expense to the LA.

Prob = Probability, Imp = Impact, Score range is Low = 1, High = 5

4.2 The main risk in not approving the recommendation is:

Risk	Implication	Prob*	Imp*	Total	Preventative action
Council publicly identified as not helping with the crisis.	Harmful to the reputation of the Council.	4	4	16	Communications to mitigate adverse publicity.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Council that arise from this proposed scheme. Costs associated with the resettlement of refugees are met by Government grant. NYCC has agreed to front fund the programme and will act as the accountable body for the receipt and spending of this grant.

5.2 The proposed scheme does however have indirect cost implications for the Council which include staff time.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

6.1 This report seeks agreement to enter in a Memorandum of Understanding with participating Councils around the roles and responsibilities of different partners. It also seeks agreement to vary the terms of the nomination agreement with Broadacres Housing Association.

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 RECOMMENDATIONS:

8.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- (1) supports the North Yorkshire wide resettlement scheme to enable the resettlement of 200 Syrian refugees Countywide over the next 5 years;

- (2) agrees that this Council's commitment to this scheme shall be to accommodate about 28 people;
- (3) enters into a Memorandum of Understanding with North Yorkshire County Council and the other District Councils concerning this scheme;
- (4) authorises the Executive Director to work in partnership with NYCC and the other Districts to use Home Office Grant to procure a specialist support provider along with other ancillary services that are necessary for the smooth resettlement of refugees;
- (5) gives authority to enter into agreement with Migration Yorkshire to enable overall regional co-ordination and support;
- (6) authorises the Executive Director to agree a variation to the Council's nomination deed with Broadacres Housing Association regarding the allocation of social housing to enable the allocation of homes to Syrian refugees.

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Background papers: Migration Yorkshire proposal
Memorandum of Understanding

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