

**COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMME - SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS
RELOCATION SCHEME (SVPRS)**

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 4 October 2016

Report of Chief Officer Communities & Business

Status: For Decision

Also considered by: Cabinet - 13 October 2016

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary: This report updates Members on the current position regarding the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme and considers further actions in relation to the Community Sponsorship Programme.

This report supports the Key Aim of safe and caring communities and healthy environment

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officer(s) Hayley Brooks, Ext 7272

Recommendation to Housing & Health Advisory Committee:

For consideration and to note the content of this report.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

To approve that Officers work on and implement a process to consider applications from potential Community Sponsors so that the Council can assess whether it should consent the approval of the applicant to operate as a community sponsor in this District.

Reason for recommendation:

This Council has been asked to pledge support to resettle identified families as part of the Kent Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, if affordable and suitable private sector housing accommodation and support services are available.

This Council may be asked by local charities, who apply to resettle families as part of the Community Sponsorship Programme, to give consent to approve their application to operate as a community sponsor in this District.

Introduction and Background

- 1 In response to the current crisis in Syria, the Government set up the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) in February 2014. This scheme involves taking identified vulnerable refugees straight from the Middle East and resettling them in the UK. The refugees are given five years Humanitarian Leave to Remain and as such are able to work and claim benefits and other public funds from day one.
- 2 On 7 September 2015, the Prime Minister announced that SVPRS will be expanded so that 20,000 people will be assisted under the scheme by the end of the Parliament in 2020. Local authorities are key to the delivery of this offer. The scheme is currently voluntary and dependent on local authorities agreeing to take part.
- 3 Details of this scheme, and the Council's current position, are summarised below in paragraphs 20 to 24 below.

Community Sponsorship Programme

- 4 In addition to the SVPRS, in July 2016, a further scheme, the Community Sponsorship Programme, was launched by the Home Secretary. This scheme enables local registered charities or Community Interest Companies (the Sponsor) to apply directly to support the resettlement of refugees as part of the SVPRS.
- 5 The Sponsor must have written evidence from the local authority in which they wish to place a resettled family, which supports the approval of their application. In two-tier areas, consent must be sought from both the County and District Councils. The application is then considered by the Home Office.
- 6 The Sponsor must be able to demonstrate that they have suitable and sustainable accommodation for a resettled family, and that it will be available for a resettled family to use for a minimum of two years.
- 7 If the Sponsor does not have accommodation immediately available but is able to demonstrate that they will be able to obtain appropriate accommodation in time, the Home Office may approve the application on condition that suitable accommodation is secured.
- 8 If the cost of the accommodation exceeds Local Housing Allowance rates, the sponsor must demonstrate how they will meet the additional cost..
- 9 The local authority might object based on:
 - a) insufficient capacity to accommodate a family in the proposed housing area (e.g. lack of school places);
 - b) concerns about community tensions in the proposed housing area;

- c) where they have reason to believe that the community organisation is not suitable to undertake the resettlement of vulnerable adults and children; or
- d) another appropriate reason.
- 10 As a community sponsor, the community organisation will need to demonstrate sufficient resources (financial, housing and personnel) and a detailed Plan, backed by relevant experience of supporting communities, to resettle families over at least a one year period. They will be responsible for the families from arrive in the UK including:
- meeting the family at the airport;
 - providing a warm welcome and cultural orientation;
 - providing housing (lasting at least two years);
 - supporting access to medical and social services;
 - English language tuition; and
 - support towards employment and self-sufficiency.
- 11 If the Sponsor is unable to sustain the support over the required period of the Agreement in place, the local authority may be required to take on the support to continue the family resettlement.
- 12 Unlike the main SVPRS, the Sponsor does not receive the tariff given to local authorities as set out in the following paragraphs. The sponsor must have proven self-funded finances in place (at least £9k per family) before an agreement is approved.

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme in Kent

- 13 The original national SVPRS scheme continues and is based on the needs of individuals and prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin, including: women and girls at risk; survivors of violence and/or torture; refugees with medical needs or disabilities. Individuals accepted onto the scheme are able to bring their immediate family with them. Once cases have been assessed and referred from the UNHCR, the Home Office checks that the individual meets the eligibility criteria, carries out medical and thorough security checks and arranges the necessary visas.
- 14 Kent County Council is co-ordinating the Kent SWPRS across the County with local partners and the Home Office. Details of Identified families are sent to KCC who then pass the details onto the district and borough councils who are participating in the scheme. The details of the families include: the family make up; age and specific needs; including a full medical health assessment report. If accepted the local authority (both district and county in two-tier areas) will need to arrange housing, school places and any additional support that is required.

- 15 Kent County Council, working with district and borough councils, provides a support package delivered by local community, faith and voluntary sector organisations who have agreed to provide support services, once families are matched to a local area.

District Pledges So Far

- 16 To date 43 people have been resettled in Kent (10 families). Once pledges have been confirmed, District Council Housing Teams begin looking for suitable properties. Once these have been secured they contact KCC who then inform the Home Office. Appropriate families are then referred via KCC for consideration (Phase 1).

District/Borough	Latest position
ASHFORD	250 people (approx 50 families) over the 5 years; currently have 6 families. Resettlement support is provided by ABC staff.
CANTERBURY	10 families over the 5 years.
DARTFORD	Wish to take one at a time and will be reviewed after each family.
DOVER	12 families over the 5 years; two properties found; one family arrived early July; soon to receive another. Resettlement support is being provided by Migrant Help.
GRAVESHAM	5 families over the 5 years.
MAIDSTONE	Plan to take 6 single men or women over the 5 years, but may take a large family instead.
SEVENOAKS	To be confirmed.
SHEPWAY	10 families over the 5 years.
SWALE	10 families over the 5 years (2 per year).
THANET	8 families over the 5 years.
TONBRIDGE & MALLING	10 families over the 5 years; 1 family arrived in April. Resettlement support provided by Rethink
TUNBRIDGE WELLS	10 families over the 5 years; 2 families arrived in December; soon to receive another. Resettlement support provided by Rethink

- 17 To date, this Council has not pledged to resettle any families due to the lack of affordable private sector properties in this District. This Council has

offered our HERO service to other Kent districts to help resettle families in their areas.

- 18 This Council is experiencing an increasing demand from our customers for housing assistance as part of our duty under the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. We operate a number of incentive schemes to encourage private landlords to work with us to house people on lower incomes. Despite this, there is a lack of landlord engagement as part of our Private Sector Lettings Scheme. This is mainly due to the affordability gap between allocated Housing Benefit at Local Housing Allowance rates and high rental prices in the District. The lack of private rented properties and affordable housing in the District means that the current demand for housing for people on low income outweighs the properties available to this Council.
- 19 The scheme has just moved into Phase 2, whereby the Strategic Migration Partnerships are allocated a number of cases at regular intervals for planned charter flights, with the first charter flight arriving in the South East on 7 September 2016 and a second at the end of October.

Local Authority funding for the scheme

- 20 Under Home Office requirements, local authorities (including district and borough councils) that take families must provide resettlement support for at least one year; support in place is set out in the 'Statement of Requirements'. This involves assisting families to resettle into the UK, helping them to access all the appropriate services and starting the process of fully integrating them into their communities.

The following funding is available to local authorities for one year following the arrival of the family:

Adults:	£8,520
Children 5-18:	£8,520 plus £4,500 for education
Children 3-4:	£8,520 plus £2,250 for education
Children under 3:	£8,520

- 21 Year's two to five funding will also be available: Year 2 - £5,000 per person, Year 3 - £3,700 per person, Year 4 - £2,300 per person, Year 5 - £1,000 per person. There will also be support for education and health in years 2-5, which will be funded separately from the local authority tariff.
- 22 It is important to note that the above figures do not include the Housing Benefit and other DWP benefits (which will be paid in the usual way) or the medical care costs (which will be paid direct to the CCGs - £2,600 per person). Extra funding may be available in exceptional cases.

Key Implications

Resource (non financial)

- 23 This Council would be required to provide written consent to any Community Sponsors within the District who applies to resettle families.
- 24 If this Council pledges to support the resettlement of families in this District, Officer and partner resources would be required to meet the support and housing requirements.

Financial

- 25 a) SVPRS: Currently, the Council has made no commitment to take part in the main scheme. The offer to provide HERO advice would be made in return for payment for the service. If this Council were in the future to participate in the Kent SVPRS, the Council would receive the local authority tariff to cover costs for supporting the resettlement of families, as set out in paragraphs 20 to 21 above.
- 26 b) The Community Sponsorship Programme: If an approved Community Sponsor fails their responsibilities, additional financial costs may apply to the Council to continue to support resettled families. Other resources, for example Housing and other staff time would be necessary to process applications for the scheme to assess whether the Council is able to support an application and to work with Government departments and the County Council in the processing of the application.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

- 27 These would need to be assessed as part of the detailed planning to take any recommended actions forward as part of this work.
- 28 Legal implications would be considered as part of any assessment for written consent by this Council to support a charity as part of the Community Sponsorship Programme.

Conclusions

- 14 Members are asked to approve the work of Officers to implement a process to consider applications from potential community sponsors, as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. This will enable this Council to assess whether it should consent the approval of the applicant to operate as a community sponsor in this District.

Background [Home Office - Full Community Sponsorship Guidance](#)
Papers:

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