

## **Item 7 - Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) - Housing Provision**

The attached report was considered by the Housing & Health Advisory Committee on 28 February 2017. The relevant Minute extract is below

### Housing & Health Advisory Committee (28 February 2017, Minute 47)

In accordance with Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman had agreed to accept the report as an urgent matter to provide the Committee an opportunity to consider the report before a decision was made at Cabinet on 9 March 2017. Members were reminded that they were welcome to attend Cabinet where a decision would be taken.

The Housing and Health Manager presented the report which set out information about a vacant six bedroom social housing property and sought approval to work with West Kent Housing Association to make the property available for a Syrian refugee family, if a suitable family could be identified, as part of the Kent Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS). Suitability would be based on whether the property location, adaptations and other required support services were available to meet their needs. The Council had previously not been in a position to consider housing a refugee family due to the lack of available and suitable housing.

It was noted that any potential family would be security vetted by the Home Office. The Council would have access to local authority funding, provided by the Home Office, for support services, with additional funding available for education and any required health and medical care costs. Extra funding may be available in exceptional cases towards updating the property, additional adaptations and to cover immediate property void costs to enable it to remain empty until a suitable family was allocated to the home. There was no financial commitment for the Council.

Some Members raised concerns on suitability of the village for someone with a disability with regards to infrastructure and location; and how much and what type of support would be available particularly whether there would be access to a car. The Housing & Health Manager advised that support would be provided for the family to learn to use local transport and infrastructure and there would be nothing preventing them learning to drive. One of the top priorities would be to register them with a dentist and doctors surgery. The feedback received from other placements within the County was not highlighting any of these issues to be a particular problem.

It was noted that local residents and the Parish Council were in support. The Chairman used her discretion and allowed an interested resident of Farningham who along with friends wished to offer support, and a representative of Sevenoaks Welcome Refugees campaign group to address the committee.

## Public Sector Equality Duty

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) the Council must have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through the paper directly impacted on end users. The impact had been analysed and did not vary between groups of people. The decisions recommended through the paper would assist vulnerable families.

Resolved: That the report be noted.