

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RELOCATION SCHEME POLICY

Housing and Health Advisory Committee - 20 June 2017

Report of Chief Officer Communities & Business

Status For Consideration

Decision by Cabinet - 13 July 2017

Key Decision Yes

Executive Summary: This report sets out this Council's Policy for participating in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS) in Kent.

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

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Michelle Lowe

Contact Officers Hayley Brooks, Ext. 7272

Recommendation to Housing and Health Advisory Committee: For consideration and to note the content of this report.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

- a) to adopt the Sevenoaks District Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme Policy set out in Appendix A;
- b) to delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Housing to make decisions relating to the Sevenoaks District Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme Policy.

Reason for recommendation:

This Council has been asked to support to resettle Syrian refugee families as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme in Kent. This report sets out a Policy to enable further properties to be used, if affordable and suitable accommodation and support services are identified in the future.

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.
- 3 The national SVPRS is currently voluntary and dependent on local authorities agreeing to take part. Every local authority is being asked by the Home Office to support this Scheme. To date, around 32 families have been resettled by district councils in Kent, in partnership with Kent County Council.
- 4 On 28 February 2017, Members approved for Officers to work with West Kent Housing Association to make available one vacant six bedroom adapted social housing property in Eynsford as part of the Kent SVPRS. This work continues to be progressed in partnership with the housing association, Home Office and Kent County Council to find a suitable Syrian refugee family.
- 5 Housing Syrian refugee families in rented accommodation relies mainly on local private landlords willing to offer a property to this Council and the Home Office as part of this Scheme, when no local need has been identified for the property. This Council has not yet been approached by any private landlords or other organisations offering suitable family sized properties to resettle refugee families.
- 6 The recommendation set out in this report asks Members to adopt the Sevenoaks District SVPRS Policy, as set out at Appendix A, to enable this Council to participate in the national scheme when suitable and affordable properties are identified.
- 7 The Policy provides for this Council to work closely with local partners including Kent County Council, and the contracted support provider. Any property put forward for approval under the Policy would have to be assessed as affordable and suitable by the appropriate Officers in consultation with Kent County Council and the local health provider.
- 8 When making a decision under the Policy, the Council will have regard to a number of national strategic policies and procedures, already in place as part of the national SVPRS, including the Strategic Partnership for Migration's Statement of Outcomes and the setting up of a Sevenoaks District SVPRS Steering Group including appropriate representatives from this Council and Kent County Council.

Key Implications

Financial

- 9 If this Council were to support the resettlement of families in this District under the SVPRS, the Council would receive the local authority tariff from the Home Office to cover the support and associated costs relating to the work. Additional Home Office funding may be available for exceptional circumstances such as home adaptations.

Resource (non financial)

- 10 If this Council supports the resettlement of families in this District, existing Officer and partner resources would be required to meet the support and housing requirements. This Council's existing strong partnerships with local key agencies, the voluntary sector and local community groups would be needed to support the families and this work.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

- 11 This Council has a Memorandum of Understanding with Kent County Council outlining the responsibilities of both parties as part of the SVPRS. This is already in place as it was needed for the property approved by Members on 9 March 2017.

Equality Assessment

- 12 Members are reminded 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 this paper directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people. The results of this analysis are set out immediately below.
- 13 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out. The decisions recommended through this paper will assist vulnerable families.

Conclusions

- 14 Members are asked to adopt the Sevenoaks District SVPRS Policy to enable this Council to support the resettlement of Syrian refugee families, if suitable and affordable housing is identified. This Policy includes delegating powers for this work to the Portfolio Holder responsible for Housing, in consultation with local Members.

Appendices Appendix A - Sevenoaks District Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme Policy and Policy appendices 1-4

Background Papers [Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement \(VPR\) Programme - Guidance for local authorities and partners \(28 October 2015\)](#)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/472020/Syrian_Resettlement_Fact_Sheet_gov_uk.pdf

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