

## **Afghan Local Employed Staff Relocation Scheme (Housing, Andy Kefford)**

### **Synopsis of report:**

**To update Members on the progress of Runnymede Borough Council's commitment to support three households being relocated from Afghanistan under the Local Employed Staff scheme.**

### **Recommendation(s):**

**None. This report is for information only.**

## **1. Context and background of report**

- 1.1 The UK Government contacted local authorities on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021 and 30<sup>th</sup> July 2021 to seek assistance with relocating individuals who had worked with the British Army in Afghanistan under a scheme that the Government had put in place as a result of events which had taken place in Afghanistan.
- 1.2 Approval was given via a Standing Order 42 on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021 for Runnymede Borough Council to support three households containing Locally Employed Staff being relocated to the UK. A report was also presented at the November Housing Committee.

## **2. The Afghan Resettlement Scheme**

- 2.1 The aim of the scheme devised by the Government is to provide a range of support services to such individuals for a limited period to enable them to establish themselves in the UK.
- 2.2 Runnymede Borough Council committed to resettle three Afghan families and all three have now arrived and been provided with accommodation in the Borough. These families are made up of 6 adults and 13 children. Two of the three families have moved into temporary accommodation within Council stock and one of the families has moved directly into private rented accommodation arranged by the Council.
- 2.3 The first family moved into temporary accommodation on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021, the second family moved into private rented housing on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and the third family moved into temporary accommodation on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021.
- 2.4 The two families that have moved into temporary accommodation have completed homeless applications with the Council and they are being supported by the Housing Solutions Team under our Section 189B relief duties. This is a duty to assist the family to find and secure alternative, long-term housing in the private rented sector. The families are being supported to undertake their own searches for accommodation, alongside the Council's efforts to identify suitable housing.
- 2.5 The Runnymede and Spelthorne Resettlement Team who are supporting all three families in Runnymede, have now appointed a "family support coordinator" specifically to assist these three families. The team are also in

the process of appointing volunteers to assist with the resettlement of these families.

- 2.6 Since the three families arrived in the Borough of Runnymede, the Resettlement Team have successfully registered all three of the lead males in the households onto a pre-entry level ESOL course (English for Speakers of Other Languages), at Strode's College, Egham. It is anticipated that all three adults will quickly progress from this course onto ESOL level one. They are receiving 1-2-1 support with this and volunteers at the Royal Holloway are also providing assistance with ESOL training online.
- 2.7 The team have also started the enrolment process for ESOL for all three lead women in the households and their course start dates are imminent. The team are working on creating a childcare setting so that parents are able to attend ESOL classes together.
- 2.8 All three of the families have successfully been registered with GPs in the area and applications to dentists have been submitted. This is proving slightly more difficult to achieve due to dentist rules, however, the team will continue with this until successful.
- 2.9 For all three families, they have completed the appropriate applications for housing benefit and/or universal credit and these benefits are in payment. The utilities at each of the properties have been set up and are in place.
- 2.10 The Resettlement Team are in the process of arranging for an organisation to meet with the families in the next couple of weeks to discuss employment prospects and CV writing.
- 2.11 One of the families hold an international driving license and is therefore able to drive in England. This family are hoping to purchase a car which will enable them to travel independently. The other families that are unable to drive are being supported to access public transport. If they wish to drive, they will need to complete their theory test and once passed, the Resettlement Team may be able to secure and provide funding towards their first 10 driving lessons. There is a shortage of HGV drivers nationally and once they have completed the appropriate tests and hold the correct licenses, these types of job roles have been discussed and have received encouragement from the families.
- 2.12 The culture in England is significantly different to Afghanistan so the Resettlement Team have been working with the families to understand safeguarding, safety, and culture.
- 2.13 Each family have signed a plan, which outlines what they need to do and what the Resettlement Team will do to support them. These plans are kept under regular review as key milestones are achieved and new objectives are set.

### **3. Policy framework implications**

- 3.1 The policy framework being utilised to support the LES households relocating from Afghanistan replicates the framework in place for supporting homeless households or households threatened with homelessness.

#### 4. **Resource implications (where applicable)**

- 4.1 Financial assistance to support households relocating to the UK from Afghanistan is provided by central government.
- 4.2 The funding provided by Government was intended to cover an initial four-month period, which was quickly extended to 12 months. Recently the Government have further extended the support package, which means support can now be provided for a three-year period.
- 4.3 The funding is only claimable should the family continue to require support. It is envisaged that the level of support each family will need should gradually decrease as they become settled in the country.
- 4.4 The annual financial rate of support for each household member are now as follows:

Description	Tariff (£)
<b>Integration Support Package</b> (per person for 12 months following arrival)	10,500
<b>ESOL</b> (single payment per adult who requires it)	850
<b>12-24 months</b> (per beneficiary i.e. per person)	6,000
<b>25-36 months</b> (per beneficiary i.e. per person)	4,020

#### 5. **Legal implications**

- 5.1 The UK Government has made a public commitment to aid Afghan nationals who worked for the UK in Afghanistan. Assistance is being provided by allowing such nationals leave to enter the UK initially with a view to them obtaining indefinitely leave to remain.
- 5.2 Local authorities in the UK are being asked to provide temporary assistance to such Afghan nationals to enable them to settle. Funding for the delivery of assistance services is being provided by the Government for a limited period of time. It is expected that due to the language skills such Afghan nationals will settle into the UK relatively easily.
- 5.3 Any services and assistance that local authorities provide will be under their existing statutory powers.

#### 6. **Equality implications**

- 6.1 We are aware of the makeup of the households Runnymede are receiving.
- 6.2 The information we have received to date indicates that the households do not have any significant health, mobility and/or mental health issues.
- 6.3 The Resettlement Team will enlist the relevant statutory agency to support with any health concern. Appropriate accommodation will be identified to meet any mobility needs and where required for it to be adapted to meet any long-term needs.

6.4 Financial provision is made within the Central Government Funding for the adaptation of any permanent property – should this be necessary.

**7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications**

7.1 Consideration will need to be given to the energy performance of any permanent accommodation to ensure that the household are not at risk of fuel poverty.

**8. Other implications (where applicable)**

8.1 None

**9. Conclusions**

9.1 The Council have now received the three families we committed to resettle as approved by this Committee. The Housing Solutions Team will work with the two families that require private rented accommodation to facilitate an appropriate move.

9.2 The Resettlement Team have achieved positive outcomes in a short space of time by ensuring the families are enrolled on ESOL courses, with GPs and that their benefits and utilities are in place. The team will continue to take appropriate steps to ensure these families are able to integrate into the community and resettle in Runnymede.

(For Information)

**Background Papers**

None