

Refugee Resettlement Update (Andy Kefford, Housing)

Synopsis of report:

To update members on our refugee resettlement commitments to both Syrian and Afghan families.

Recommendation(s):

None. This report is for information only.

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 The Housing Committee approved the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in January 2016. Approval was given to resettle ten families through this scheme.
- 1.2 Approval was given via a Standing Order 42 on 18th August 2021 and a report was presented at November 2021 Housing Committee regarding the Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme for Afghan nationals being relocated to the UK. Approval was given for Runnymede Borough Council to support three households under this provision.

2. Updates of Resettlement Scheme Progress

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

- 2.1 Runnymede Borough Council have housed four of the committed ten households. A fifth property has been identified and offered to the scheme. A family will be arriving within the next six weeks and will be resettled within the Borough.
- 2.2 As agreed by Housing Committee in 2016, the Family Support Programme will provide the support and assistance the family require to relocate and settle in the area. A request for a sixth property has been made for another family to arrive towards the end of October, early November 2022, which the Housing Team will facilitate.
- 2.3 It is therefore anticipated that Runnymede Borough Council will have resettled six of the committed ten households by the end of this calendar year. A further four properties will still need to be identified.
- 2.4 Responsibility for the Syrian Households Resettlement Scheme sat within the Community Development Business Unit. The Housing Service's role was to respond to requests for accommodation, which we did in all cases. Although the Corporate Head of Community Development who managed this process is no longer in post it is understood that there were issues with resources at Surrey Heath who provided the intensive support needed for the initial four households. The responsibility for this scheme is now with Housing and we are committed to ensuring the target of ten households is met within the next three years.

Afghan Local Employed Staff Relocation Scheme.

- 2.5 Of the three households Runnymede Borough Council committed to relocate, one has successfully moved into private rented housing and is settled. The other two households remain in temporary accommodation, whilst the Housing Team look for suitable private rented accommodation to enable move-on and settlement.
- 2.6 Locating move-on accommodation is proving difficult as there is a high demand for larger private rented properties and rental prices are generally unaffordable due to levels of rent being above the local housing allowance and households being subject to benefit capping.
- 2.7 The Housing Team will continue to proactively search for suitable move on accommodation and the two families are also being encouraged, through their Resettlement Coordinator, to find accommodation that is suitable.

Resource Capacity

- 2.8 At the January 2022 Housing Committee, members asked for an update on capacity to increase our commitment to more families being resettled under the Afghan Local Employed Staff Relocation Scheme. The Runnymede and Surrey Heath Resettlement Team, who are supporting the families in Runnymede, may be able to increase their capacity to support an additional two households, to a maximum of five on the scheme in total. However, the main issue is the lack of available private rented properties for families to move-on and resettle into.
- 2.9 Both of the resettlement schemes currently commit to resettling larger families (i.e. 3-bedroom properties), however, the Housing Solutions Team have recently received a higher demand for these larger properties both through requests for housing via our Housing Register and through homeless approaches. We therefore need to carefully balance the requirements of local people in housing need, against any further commitment to resettle additional Afghan families.
- 2.10 If Members wish to increase our commitment to resettle three households to five households, it is recommended that the additional two households are only accepted once all of the first three households have been successfully moved into private rented housing and after they have received the initial intensive support they require when moving in.
- 2.11 It is also recommended that any additional households are accepted once suitable private rented accommodation in the borough has been located and identified, rather than the households moving into temporary accommodation first. This is so that the families are able to move straight into accommodation and be provided with the support they require to settle, rather than settling into temporary accommodation and making arrangements such as school placements for children etc, only to be moved again later on once private rented accommodation is found.

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**

- 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 can be provided for a three year period, 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.
- 4.3. The annual financial rate of support for each household member are now as follows:

Description	Tariff (£)
Integration Support Package (per person for 12 months following arrival)	10,500
ESOL (single payment per adult who requires it)	850
12-24 months (per beneficiary i.e. per person)	6,000
25-36 months (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 Any services and assistance that local authorities provide will be under their existing statutory powers.

6. **Equality implications**

- 6.1 We are made aware of the makeup of the households Runnymede commit to resettle.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 Financial provision is made within the Central Government Funding for the adaptation of any permanent property.

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 has resettled four of the ten committed families under the Syrian resettlement scheme and anticipate a further two families will be resettled before the end of the calendar year. All three Afghan families we committed to resettle are in the Borough, two of which are waiting for suitable private rented accommodation.

(For information)

Background Papers

None