

Report to	Cabinet	Item
	12 September 2018	
Report of	Director of neighbourhoods	7
Subject	Proposed extension to the Syrian vulnerable persons resettlement programme	

Purpose

To seek support for an extension to the Syrian vulnerable persons resettlement programme and to seek the views of cabinet on the financial implications that may be incurred by the council.

Recommendations

- 1) To house an additional one hundred Syrian refugees over a two year period via the council's LETNCC private sector leasing scheme; and
- 2) subject to a formal agreement on funding, to contribute to the housing benefit shortfall on an equal basis with all Norfolk's district councils, up to a maximum annual cost to the city council of £8,600 per annum for 2018-19 to March 2024.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet the corporate priority a fair city and a healthy city with good housing

Financial implications

Norfolk county council are proposing to extend the current grant funding arrangements for the housing costs until 31 March 2024 which would result in the tenancy management elements of the programme being cost neutral to the city council. This is subject to formal agreement with Norfolk County Council.

For the current programme, the council contributes up to £4,300 per annum from existing budgetary provision to cover any rent shortfall as a result of the benefit cap. If the programme is extended, the council would contribute a further £4,300 per annum until 31 March 2024. This equates to £43,000 for the full five years of the programme and includes the council's current contribution.

The increased contribution would require additional general fund budgetary provision of £4,300 for the period 2019-20 to 2023-24.

All Norfolk's district councils are being requested to provide a similar level of funding.

Ward/s: All Wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Harris – Deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing

Contact officers

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Lee Robson, head of neighbourhood housing	01603 212939
Gemma Mitchell, housing outcomes manager	01603 213139

Background documents

None

Report

Background

1. In July 2016 Cabinet agreed to support the re-settlement of fifty refugees under the Government's Syrian vulnerable person's resettlement scheme and that the council would contribute to the housing rent shortfall on an equal basis with all Norfolk's district councils up to a maximum of £30,857 over five years.
2. Members will be aware that the scheme provides a mechanism for certain refugees from the continuing civil conflict in Syria to come to the UK, with the Government accepting up to 20,000 refugees over a five year period.
3. The basis of the scheme, which is voluntary, was that it would prioritise survivors of torture and violence, women and children at risk and those in need of medical care. It has been estimated that in the region of 30 per cent of refugees that are likely to access the scheme will have significant needs.
4. Refugees who are accepted onto the scheme are granted five years' humanitarian protection, with leave to remain in the UK for five years, which gives eligibility for universal benefits such as access to NHS services, housing and employment benefits. If at the end of this five year period, the refugees are unable to return to Syria, they may be eligible to apply to settle permanently in the UK.
5. Since this time, the council has worked closely with Norfolk county council who coordinate the Norfolk programme, to successfully re-settle fifty individuals in eleven households through LetNCC, the council's private sector leasing scheme.
6. A number of public and voluntary sector organisations have supported and helped the refugees rebuild their lives in Norfolk which has included community groups pledging support. The refugees' introduction to life in Norfolk included an initial three-week intensive induction programme, which explained about living in the UK, with information on benefits, signing up for utilities, opening a bank account and similar tasks.
7. More detailed support including English language lessons through to computing and driving is available.
8. It is reported that all the families have settled in well and are enjoying their new life in Norfolk with school-age children all in school or pre-school.

Proposed extension

9. Following a request from the Government, Norfolk county council has agreed to an extension of the scheme to re-settle a further 100 refugees in Norfolk subject to the support of Norfolk's district councils. As part of this proposed extension, the county council has approached the city council about housing a further one hundred refugees over a further two year period through LetNCC.
10. Norfolk county council have yet to finalise the financial arrangements but it is anticipated that these will be in line with the funding provided for the current programme. The county council have also indicated that the extension to the programme is subject to the continued willingness of the City, Borough and District

Councils to participate in the scheme all of whom have been written to, to seek their support.

11. If the scheme is extended, the refugees would arrive in four phases allowing accommodation to be sourced over a period of months. It is believed that demand on the housing market in Norwich has increased since 2016 which may make the identification of properties challenging. However, at this stage it is not thought that this is insurmountable and the phasing of the arrivals will allow the greater flexibility for finding suitable accommodation.
12. It was anticipated during the planning of the original programme, that with the introduction of the benefit cap, there would be a gap between the level of housing benefit paid and the likely cost of rented accommodation for family sized properties. The county council's submission to the Government for the Norfolk programme in 2016, included a request for additional discretionary housing benefit to cover this.
13. However no additional Government funding was provided and all Norfolk's district council's agreed to provide top up funding until March 2023, to be called upon if required, to cover this shortfall. Some of the families accommodated have seen a shortfall between the level of housing benefit paid and rent charges and the district council's funding has been called upon to fill this gap, though not to the maximum level agreed.
14. Since the arrival of the refugees, the council has contributed £2311.00 in 2017-18 and £1376.00 so far in 2018-19.
15. If the county council's proposal to extend the scheme is implemented then this issue will potentially affect the new families as no additional discretionary housing benefit is again anticipated .
16. To support the new programme, Norfolk county council has asked each district council to extend their contribution up to a maximum of £8,600 per annum to allow for the increase in client numbers. As with the current programme, this funding will only be requested if a rent gap arises.
17. Norwich city council's contribution to this shortfall would be a maximum of £8,600 per year giving a maximum of £43,000 over the five years ending March 2024. This would incorporate the current commitment of £4,300 per annum under the first phase of the programme.
18. As a voluntary scheme there is no requirement for Norfolk's district councils to contribute to the budget shortfall. However, as the council's private sector leasing scheme would again be used for accommodating the refugees, any liability from non-payment of rent would fall to the city council if this is not forthcoming.
19. Officers have not as yet received confirmation from Norfolk county council on the final budget details or if the other district councils are willing to provide additional top up funding. Should any further information be available this will be provided at the meeting.
20. A decision on the final details of the scheme will be made by the director of neighbourhoods in consultation with the deputy Leader and cabinet member for social housing.

Integrated impact assessment



NORWICH
City Council

The IIA should assess **the impact of the recommendation** being made by the report

Detailed guidance to help with completing the assessment can be found [here](#). Delete this row after completion

Report author to complete

Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	12 September 2018
Head of service:	Lee Robson
Report subject:	Proposed Syrian refugee resettlement scheme
Date assessed:	12 September 2018
Description:	

	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The scheme may result in the council incurring costs if they are not fully funded by the Government, Norfolk county council or Norfolk's district councils.
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ICT services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Economic development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The programme will support vulnerable refugees re-settle in the greater Norwich area and will enhance their financial inclusion
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The programme will support vulnerable refugees re-settle in the greater Norwich area and will enhance the wellbeing and safety of children
<u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Human Rights Act 1998	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The programme will support vulnerable refugees re-settle in the greater Norwich area
Health and well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The programme will support vulnerable refugees re-settle in the greater Norwich area and will enhance the wellbeing

	Impact			
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The programme will support vulnerable refugees re-settle in the greater Norwich area and provide an opportunity for Norwich communities to understand at first hand the needs and experiences of refugees
Eliminating discrimination & harassment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The programme will support vulnerable refugees re-settle in the greater Norwich area which will eliminate the harassment and discrimination they face in Syria
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The programme will support vulnerable refugees re-settle in the greater Norwich area and enhance their opportunities and life chances.
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Natural and built environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Waste minimisation & resource use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pollution	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sustainable procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Energy and climate change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments

	Impact			
Risk management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Recommendations from impact assessment				
Positive				
Negative				
Neutral				
Issues				