

Scrutiny committee

Extraordinary Meeting

Date: **Tuesday, 25 July 2023**
Time: **16:30**
Venue: **Council chamber City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich, NR2 1NH**

There will be a pre meeting for members of the committee at 16:00.

Committee members:

Councillors:

Ackroyd (Chair)
Thomas (Va) (Vice chair)
Carrington
Driver
Fox
Francis
Fulton-McAlister (M)
Galvin
Haynes
Osborn
Padda
Prinsley
Stutely
Thomas (Vi)

For further information please contact:

Committee officer: Alex Hand
t: (01603) 989398
e: alexhand@norwich.gov.uk

Democratic services
City Hall
Norwich
NR2 1NH

www.norwich.gov.uk

Information for members of the public

Members of the public and the media have the right to attend meetings of full council, the cabinet and committees except where confidential information or exempt information is likely to be disclosed, and the meeting is therefore held in private.

For information about attending or speaking at meetings, please contact the committee officer above or refer to the council's website.

If you would like this agenda in an alternative format, such as a larger or smaller font, audio or Braille, or in a different language, please contact the committee officer above.

Agenda

Page nos

- | | | |
|----------|--|---------------|
| 1 | Apologies To receive apologies for absence. | |
| 2 | Declarations of interest (Please note that it is the responsibility of individual members to declare an interest prior to the item if they arrive late for the meeting). | |
| 3 | Scrutiny review of welcoming Refugees and Asylum Seekers to Norwich and overcoming obstacles to their smooth integration Purpose: To update the Scrutiny Committee on the work undertaken to review the welcome of refugees and asylum seekers to Norwich, and how obstacles to their smooth integration can be overcome. | 5 - 24 |

Date of publication: **Monday, 17 July 2023**



Committee name: Scrutiny

Committee date: 25/07/2023

Report title: Scrutiny review of welcoming Refugees and Asylum Seekers to Norwich and overcoming obstacles to their smooth integration

Portfolio: Councillor Adam Giles, portfolio holder for communities and social integration

Report from: Head of legal and procurement

Wards: All Wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to update the Scrutiny Committee on the work undertaken to review the welcome of refugees and asylum seekers to Norwich, and how obstacles to their smooth integration can be overcome.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee review the work undertaken at this stage and:

- 1) Determine whether there are any recommendations they wish to raise at this point;
- 2) Whether they wish to commission further work to be undertaken.

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.

- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the corporate priority to ensure that people can live independently and well in a diverse and safe City

Background

1. The scrutiny committee when considering its 2022-23 work programme decided to explore the topic welcoming immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers to Norwich and officers brought forward a Terms of Reference for the topic which was considered at the [January 2023](#) meeting (within the work programme item).
2. The Terms of Reference included a survey targeted at community groups to capture the lived experiences of the cohort. Further a visit was arranged to the Zainab café, a community group supporting refugees and asylum seekers to gain work experience. Members visited the scheme and meet with individuals directly and heard their views.
3. The outcomes of the survey and summary of the visit conversations were presented at the [March 2023](#) committee meeting. Unfortunately only three organisations responded to the survey and members considered how best to progress gathering the views of service users in this cohort. March committee resolved the following actions and the progress of these is noted below:

| Recommendation | Progress | Next steps |
|--|--|---|
| Investigate with partner organisations, and decide upon, a method of approach that is acceptable to asylum seekers and refugees, that allows the committee to gain data directly from service users so that the committee can understand the level of need within the city | <p>One of the council's community enabling officers contacted three organisations that work with refugees and asylum seekers in Norwich; British Red Cross, New Routes and Bridge Plus. All three organisations would be willing to facilitate further conversations with service users, this would require funding from the city council.</p> <p>The organisations raised issues around information sharing and communicating with the council.</p> | <p>The community enabling officer is going to maintain and build on links with these organisations and it is hoped through this approach issues regarding information sharing and communication can be resolved.</p> <p>If members want to hear further views from service users what questions would they like to ask.</p> |
| Ask the Head of legal and procurement to ask relevant managers to ensure that all customer contact assistants were aware of the Intran translation service and that the availability of the | It was established that all staff can access guidance on the Intran service on the council's intranet. The customer contact manager has been raising awareness of the service at customer contact team meetings. All managers in organisation have been | Resolved |

| | | |
|---|--|--------------|
| service was advertised | provided information about the service and offered 1 hour training. | |
| Ask officers if any data sets around refugees and asylum seekers were already available | This has been explored, however it has been difficult to identify or obtain datasets due to the fluid nature of communities in question and that data on former asylum seekers / refugees does not appear to be systematically recorded. | Resolved |
| Ask officers to investigate if there were any council owned properties that the Zainab Project could use as a base | This enquiry has been passed to the property team who have been reviewing potential opportunities. The communities team were also made aware and are looking to see if other organisations they work with can assist. | In progress. |
| Review the list of issues raised by service users at the Zainab Café and ask for an update to be brought to a meeting of the scrutiny committee early in the civic year | Please see attached. | In progress |

How the work has progressed

4. The Democratic Services team have worked closely with the Communities and Housing team to progress the review.
5. Early in the process it became evident there may be some challenges in taking forward the review as envisaged. In particular, there was concern about meeting and surveying refugees and asylum seekers about their experiences, in particular potential fear on the part of participants about engaging with a government institution about their experience, and the care required when working with refugees and asylum seekers to avoid triggering traumatic experiences.
6. We have therefore engaged with representatives of the British Red Cross, New Routes, Bridge Plus and Zainab café who have been invited to committee to meet members and answer any questions they may have. If members wish to further gather the views of refugees and asylum seekers support from these key agencies would be crucial.
7. A theme reflected in feedback from support agencies was a lack of information sharing regarding who is engaging with refugees and asylum seekers. It is to be noted that when the Home Office places a refugee or asylum seeker in the Norwich area there is no obligation to advise either the city or county council.

The Home Office subcontracts out to accommodation providers, the main provider is Serco. Serco have not responded to our request to answer member questions.

8. Concerns were raised relating to conditions in asylum hotels; a Council Officer attends regular partner meetings with Serco and relayed the feedback we had received to Serco in order to raise with the hotels.
9. The city council do have a role in relation to ensuring the fitness for habitation of a dwelling within its area. Therefore, if enforcement officers are aware of substandard living conditions they will investigate and where appropriate take action. Where officers are aware this is the case referrals to investigate have taken place.
10. As a local authority, our specific responsibilities are limited; we have a duty to provide housing to those entitled to receive housing support and will assist with benefits or specific items such as disabled facilities grants. However, the support refugees and asylum seekers require often goes much further including education (including English language courses), physical and mental health and wellbeing, access to employment, legal support and specific forms of social services support.
11. To fully understand some of the challenges, effective engagement with partners is required to understand the difficulties presented. Although it was intended to invite the manager of the Norfolk County Council Persons from Abroad Team to this meeting, members subsequently indicated the nature of questions they would like to talk about could involve discussion related to specific individuals, and therefore this will be picked up outside of the committee meeting.

Other research

12. As part of their work, the Good Economy Commission explored how refugees and asylum seekers participate in the local economy. Their report can be found [here](#)
13. We have also engaged with the East of England Strategic Migration Partnership, who are formed to co-ordinate and support delivery of national asylum seeker and refugee schemes in the area. More information about the partnership including their current projects is available [here](#)
14. There is also a range of national and local guidance available about provision of support. This includes [information on the Norfolk County Council website](#) about local sources of support and the Local Government Association, who provide information about Councils' role in supporting refugees and asylum seekers [here](#). National third sector organisations who provide support to refugees and asylum seekers include the Red Cross (more information [here](#)) and [Citizens Advice](#)

Next Steps

15. Members are asked to consider how they would like work on this matter to proceed. Officers have put in place channels of communications with key partner organisations and it is hoped this will enable greater understanding and collaboration going forward.

16. The city council received funding under the asylum dispersal policy for each asylum seeker in its area in the year 2022/23 to the value of £250. This funding is set to increase in this financial year. Officers are working on a report for cabinet to consider which will explore options for the use of these funds.

Consultation

17. As set out above, this report has been informed by a survey of organisations and a liaison event with refugees and asylum seekers and a subsequent meeting with key providers of support on how to progress conversations with the cohort.

Implications

Financial and resources

18. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2022-26 and budget.
19. At this stage, a contribution has been made to the running costs of the event at the Zainab Café. Officer time has also been incurred in undertaking the review work so far.
20. Clearly, any additional work will incur officer time, which will depend on the level of work commissioned.

Legal Implications

21. As above, the Council has limited duties with regards refugees and asylum seekers, with other bodies holding further statutory duties.

Statutory considerations

| Consideration | Details of any implications and proposed measures to address: |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Equality and diversity | Whilst this report does not present specific equality implications in its own right, further work commissioned may cause have implications (potentially positive impacts) |
| Health, social and economic impact | Recommendations or further work by the scrutiny committee may have a positive impact on the health, social and economic outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers |
| Crime and disorder | This report is not considered to have specific impacts on crime and disorder |
| Children and adults safeguarding | Recommendations or further work by the scrutiny committee may have a positive impact on the child and adult safeguarding risks in relation to refugees and asylum seekers |

| Consideration | Details of any implications and proposed measures to address: |
|----------------------|--|
| Environmental impact | This report is not considered to have specific environmental impacts |

Risk management

| Risk | Consequence | Controls required |
|---|--|--|
| Ineffective arrangements exist to support refugees and asylum seekers to integrate into the local community | Refugees and asylum seekers do not fulfil their potential as members of local society, and potentially suffer adverse health and wellbeing effects | There are a range of support mechanisms for refugees and asylum seekers locally. This review was commissioned in order to assess potential recommendations to strengthen the support received. |

Other options considered

22. There are two options presented for the Scrutiny Committee to consider:

- a. Ending the review at this point, potentially making recommendations based on the work thus far
- b. Commissioning further work to be undertaken, whether as part of a broad review of asylum seeker and refugee support or to undertake a specific review of elements of the support provision

Reasons for the decision/recommendation


23. The scrutiny committee has requested a review of support for asylum seekers and refugees. This report provides an update on the work to date and seeks the Committee's views on how it should progress.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: List of matters from Zainab cafe

Contact officer: Alex Hand, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Email address: alexhand@norwich.gov.uk

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>If you would like this agenda in an alternative format, such as a larger or smaller font, audio or Braille, or in a different language, please contact the committee officer above.</p> |
|---|--|

List of matters from Zainab café

| | Matter | Update |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | <p>Housing (Serco/ Home Office run)</p> <p>With regard to hotels, the refugees and asylum seekers expressed that the living conditions are unsatisfactory. They mentioned that the food that is being provided is not in keeping with their religious and cultural practices (halal food mostly) or was too spicy to eat or enjoy. Additionally, the hotel made no provision for the fasting period during Ramadan. The conditions of the rooms within the hotel were described as being poor, some reported issues such as overly humid and damp rooms and even the presence of insects and bed bugs.</p> | <p>The Home Office are responsible for providing accommodation to asylum seekers and this is subcontracted out to providers. The People from Abroad Team (PfAT) who are a County Council Team provide support to asylum seekers and refugees provided the following information in italics, please note PfAT are not the accommodation provider:</p> <p><i>The contingency hotels for asylum seekers are Home Office responsibilities under the Immigration Act 1999. In the East of England, this is provided via Serco under the Asylum Accommodation and Support Contract (AASC), of which Schedule 2 provides the Statement of Requirements – this is a detailed document which requires the provider (Serco and it's subcontractors) to adhere to standards of service delivery. We are aware of difficulties with the standards of food provided in these full-board provisions, and have been actively working with the Home Office and Serco to ensure improvements are made. In recent weeks, changes have been made to the catering providers and we understand resident satisfaction with meals has improved. The AASC requires both halal and vegetarian options to be made available at each of the three mealtimes daily. We are aware of an incident where one member of the catering staff mistakenly informed residents that meat was not halal – this was incorrect and this member of staff is no longer working for the provider.</i></p> <p><i>Unfortunately, it is impossible for the Home Office to predict how long someone may need to remain in contingency hotels; the high level demands on the asylum system simply means there is insufficient supply of regular housing to accommodate everyone who needs it. The government have announced a Full Asylum Dispersal policy which Serco and the other providers are in the process of procuring and delivering.</i></p> |
| 2 | <p>Children in hotels</p> <p>Issue that there are no snacks provided after school</p> | <p>Response from PfAT:</p> <p><i>This has been raised in the Integrated Care Board meetings about the hotels fortnightly and we have been reassured it has been resolved. In addition, there is a weekly Homework Club on</i></p> |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | | <i>Tuesday evenings run by the People from Abroad Team with a teacher and development worker in attendance, which provides help and support to school-age children, with learning opportunities and help for them to complete homework, reading, improve ESOL and also have fun</i> |
| 3 | Safeguarding in hotels | <i>A fortnightly meeting is convened by the Integrated Care Board which Serco attends, at this meeting issues are raised, logged and tracked to ensure they are resolved by the provider. A monthly meeting is convened by the Strategic Migration Partnership with an overview of the hotels, to which Serco, its subcontractors and the Home Office are invited. These meetings are attended by health and social care representatives, and safeguarding issues are reviewed and appropriately supervised.</i> |
| 4 | Support People desperately need advice and people reaching out to them. The council could encourage friendliness | <i>The People from Abroad Team provides in-reach health and social care at each of the hotels on a regular basis. In addition, Serco or its subcontractors employ Housing Officers at each site who are able to signpost residents to places of help. We also have access to interpreters as required on the telephone, so language should not be an issue. People seeking asylum and those who have been granted refugee status, along with every other member of the community can also go to any library and ask for help, library staff also have access to interpreting and translation services. Voluntary sector partners all offer advice and support, signposting and other assistance and try to publicise their services widely</i> |
| 5 | Council Housing Other refugees had been housed in council housing and spoke about their experiences. One individual mentioned that if they had known the area of Norwich that they would be housed in, they would not have agreed to the home. The area where they were living had issues related to drug and gang crime and antisocial behaviour. | <i>There is a shortage of social housing supply and if a household is homeless they are obliged to take a reasonable offer of a property. Issues with ASB, repairs and adaptations can be raised with housing officers.</i> |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 6 | <p data-bbox="297 236 454 264">Healthcare</p> <p data-bbox="297 308 875 1046">All groups expressed some issues with their experiences of the healthcare system. Some explained that they had difficulties getting appointments with their GPs and after care, post appointment. Volunteers highlighted that in many cases it seemed like refugees and asylum seekers were registered with GP surgeries that were a significant distance from their home, due to a lack of Arabic speaking doctors in reasonably close proximity to their homes. The distance to GP surgeries and pharmacies had caused health issues, as they were unable to get to the surgery easily to attend appointments or get medication from their pharmacy. All those that spoke of it mentioned that they were unable to get dental appointments.</p> <p data-bbox="297 1082 875 1337">The general feeling was that they did not understand the way the system works. There seems to be a particular lack of understanding with regards to the length of appointments, how to order repeat prescriptions and how to change the nominated pharmacy.</p> | <p data-bbox="902 276 972 304"><i>PfAT:</i></p> <p data-bbox="902 316 2145 624"><i>There is a comprehensive package of healthcare and social care provided, and healthcare screenings are undertaken by the integrated health and social care team as soon as possible after arrival. Residents are all registered with a local GP practice. The 24-hour staffing in the hotels are able to contact emergency services as required.</i></p> <p data-bbox="902 475 2145 624"><i>The situation regarding NHS dentists is a chronic and county-wide problem – there are no dentists accepting new NHS patients anywhere in Norfolk currently – regardless of a person’s immigration status. The ICB are well aware of this issue – it is not unique to asylum seekers and refugees however, it is a problem affecting a large proportion of the population.</i></p> <p data-bbox="902 707 2107 775">The scrutiny committee’s representative on the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee can raise the issue around capacity at G.P surgeries</p> <p data-bbox="902 818 2056 887">Officers will flag with the Health and Wellbeing Board, in particular how could they promote the prescription service and how it works.</p> |
|---|--|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 7 | <p>Language</p> <p>A key topic that all groups discussed was the importance of having information in a language that they understood. All of the refugees and asylum seekers expressed great desire to learn and improve their English language skills. Many of the refugees and asylum seekers voiced that they felt there was not enough hours of English courses offered to them, this was partially due to their entitlement but was also due to a lack of knowledge of other free or low-cost English language courses. The main organisations that were spoken about were EnglishPlus and the City College. Most spoke about wanting to improve their English language so that they could better integrate into Norwich and to gain employment.</p> | <p>Response from PfAT</p> <p><i>Refugees and others with valid permission to live in the UK are able to work, and the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund currently funds a project to provide employment support. This includes accessing vocational-based English (ESOL) Classes to help individuals to improve their vocabulary and thus their prospects of gaining employment. Refugees who are part of one of the Resettlement Programmes (UKRS/ARAP/ACRS) receive 16 hours per week of ESOL classes for the first year of their resettlement, this is unfortunately not available for those who are not part of resettlement schemes; the ESOL provision from City College and other providers will largely be controlled by the available funding under the Adult Education Budget, which is set down by central government and has strict funding rules. Those rules also state that people who are still awaiting a decision on their asylum application are not able to access AEB-funded courses until their claim has been pending for more than 6 months. The availability of ESOL is also governed by the availability of ESOL tutors to deliver the learning – following the significant numbers of Ukrainian arrivals and the demand on ESOL provision across the county, NCC Adult Learning have advised us there are no available ESOL tutors to deliver any more courses</i></p> |
| 8 | <p>Activities</p> <p>There is a lack of information about what people can do in Norwich especially free activities</p> | <p>The city council promotes Lumi a website which lists free or low cost activities in the area. Officers will highlight to agencies working with service users. Asylum Seekers have been offered free use of the Riverside Leisure Centre and feedback has been positive.</p> |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| | | <p>Response from PfAT:</p> <p><i>We are actively working with the voluntary sector to promote and deliver a range of off-site provisions residents can participate in, including informal English classes, sports activities, social groups and volunteering opportunities.</i></p> <p><i>Access to recreational and sports activities for residents in contingency hotels is already a piece of work underway and there are classes each week being delivered at each of the hotels, co-ordinated by the People from Abroad Team. This will increase in frequency in due course</i></p> |
| 9 | <p>Education</p> <p>Many of the refugees and asylum seekers spoke about their frustration with education in Norwich. For those with children they expressed that they felt let down by the schools. They suggested that the broader societal attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers were reflected in the attitudes of other pupils towards the young refugees and asylum seekers. They also spoke about the racism that their children faced within local schools, with parents perceiving that their children were being blamed for others misbehaviour.</p> <p>Younger refugees and asylum seekers expressed further frustration with the education system as due to their age they were unable to access free GCSEs.</p> | <p>Education is a County Council function, but the city council could participate in events to promote community cohesion and challenge negative stereotyping of refugees and asylum seekers.</p> <p>See the comments from PfAB regarding children in hotels and extra education provision they provide.</p> <p>Refugee Week is an annual event and runs from 16 June 2023, this is promoted by the council and a list of all events sent to members.</p> |
| 10 | Employment | <p>The rules in relation to work are different for asylum seeker and refugees, regarding asylum seekers, from PfAT:</p> |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| | <p>All of the groups spoke about employment, as all wanted to work if they were able to. Each group highlighted the experience and skills that they had gained from their home country. Many wanted to start working as soon as they were allowed to work, as generally, they were unhappy with receiving money for not working. However due to a range of issues, such as lack of English language skills, recognised qualifications or other barriers, they were unable to work. It was suggested that the council could work with businesses who would be willing to employ refugees with the appropriate work permits and whose English was not quite at the required level. This would aid community cohesion and allow these individuals to improve their English “on the job”.</p> | <p><i>Parliament has debated on immigration laws and it is the UK government’s directive that the Home Office is responsible for providing accommodation and subsistence whilst applicants’ claims for asylum are being processed. This is provided under Sections 95 and 98 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and meets the UK’s obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 by avoiding a breach of Article 3. Whilst someone’s asylum claim is being considered, the person is not permitted to work, unless they have a claim outstanding for 12+ months and are seeking to do work on the Skills Shortage List published by the government. The prohibition of employment is in primary statute and we are unable to change this. Current support rates for people in asylum contingency accommodation where full board is provided is set at £9.15 per week by the Home Office.</i></p> |
| 11 | <p>Volunteering</p> <p>Could the city council provide work experience opportunities perhaps through NCSL</p> | <p><i>It is lawful for people seeking asylum to do volunteering, provided it is for a charity or other non-profit organisation. They cannot be doing something that could be considered “work”.</i></p> <p><i>Work experience as part of a course of study is permitted for people seeking asylum, but they would not be able to do work experience otherwise. Work experience would be limited to those who have permission to work. Work experience is offered via the AMIF-funded Employment Support Scheme, and it would be great if City Council could become one of the provider partners</i></p> |

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| | | <i>under this scheme. There would be no point City Council to set up its own work experience framework if it would be unlawful for the intended participants to participate</i> |
| 12 | <p>Interacting with council services</p> <p>Frustrations were shared by refugees and asylum seekers and volunteers with councillors and officers in regard to contacting and interacting with the council. One volunteer highlighted that they had called the council over 15 times and each time been informed that there were no translation services, despite this being advertised on the website.</p> <p>Some expressed the view that it felt like once someone was in longer term housing that they were forgotten about. A number of individuals were in unsuitable homes due to a range of issues and there was uncertainty about how to ask for changes or adaptations.</p> <p>It was felt that the Norwich City Council website needed to improve as it was difficult to navigate, especially if their English language skills were not particularly strong. Those that had good English skills also found the website difficult to navigate as there was insufficient details to explain services.</p> | <p>Issue regarding access to Intran raised with Customer Contact Manager and reminder have been made at team meetings. All managers in organisation provided information and offered one hour training course. Confirmed that all staff have access to Intran and there is guidance on how to use on the council's intranet.</p> <p>There is a shortage of council housing and a high housing need in the area making provision challenging. Housing officers can provide advice on changes and adaptations.</p> <p>Comments feedback to website team, wider accessibility website work is ongoing.</p> <p>It is possible to use google translate on website.</p> |

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| | <p>Is there awareness training for council staff in dealing with people that have experience trauma (trauma-led care) especially in housing and benefits services</p> <p>Partner organisations raised concerns regarding communicating with the council.</p> <p>In particular they would like to see a dedicated telephone for vulnerable service users, better communication between the housing and benefits teams and information provided in writing to service users in order that the support agencies can assist them.</p> | <p>The community enabling team are working with key organisations that support refugees and asylum seekers to enable better understanding of need and council services.</p> <p>Officers will follow up and see how information provided.</p> |
| 13 | <p>Integration</p> <p>It was raised that people who want to help service users are not allowed at the hotels.</p> | <p>Outreach is currently provided by Norfolk County Council but the city council could promote events which work towards integration such as an international culture day.</p> <p>Response PfAT</p> <p><i>In our discussions with the Home Office and Serco, there are some significant safeguarding concerns about allowing random individuals from entering what is private premises. The Home Office have instructed that only authorised staff should be permitted to enter a site, this does include local authority and healthcare staff. We are actively working with the voluntary sector to promote and deliver a range of off-site provisions residents can participate in, including informal English classes, sports activities, social groups and volunteering opportunities. It is important for residents of contingency hotels to leave the premises and attend other local</i></p> |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | <p>What kind of workshops go on for people in hostels, council could hold workshops/presentations 'welcome to Norwich', include police – would help stop crime, stop mental health issues.</p> <p>Lack of community hub</p> | <p><i>facilities for a whole range of wellness and wellbeing reasons. There have been incidents of far-right groups attempting to enter hotels, and undercover journalists attempting to exploit and uncover situations. The Home Office have been clear what the security arrangements for the hotels are; independent organisations attempting to access the premises are likely to be refused entry</i></p> <p><i>This is in development, but due to the pressure of work it has not been achieved yet. Norfolk Police proposed some input last year, but on review it was found to more alarmist and counter-productive to deliver</i></p> <p>There are organisations which exist in the city and provide services to refugees and asylum seekers but the organisations might need space to do this.</p> |
|--|---|--|

Response to queries / recommendations raised by Cllr Galvin and circulated to the Committee

| | | |
|----------|--|---|
| 1 | <p>Governance of hotels; visiting service with advice etc – safeguarding in hotels, how does it work</p> | <p>The arrangements to monitor governance of hotels includes the following. Please note that the Home Office contract SERCO to provide asylum accommodation in the East; this is sub-contracted to Cromwood in Norwich.</p> <p>East of England Migration Partnership: These happen bi-monthly and are attended by Home Office (when available)/East of England Migration Partnership staff/Local authorities: tier 1 and 2/Health/SERCO/Cromwood/Police. These meetings are operational and strategic as it's a flow information</p> |
|----------|--|---|

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | | <p>from Home Office via EELGA who run the meetings to the hotels etc.</p> <p>Contingency hotel meetings: These happen fortnightly and are more operational focussed and are attended by SERCO/Cromwood/Tier 1 and 2 Local authorities (inc. People from abroad team (PFAT))/Police/Health/Public health. These meetings are operational only and concern the people and health interactions, community safety issues, access to new referrals and numbers in properties and any arising issues.</p> <p>Norfolk migration strategic partnership: These are held quarterly and are chaired by the Chief Executive of Great Yarmouth Borough Council. These are more strategically focussed on system-wide issues around safety/health/pressures and system blocks. This attended by a very wide group of partners.</p> |
| 2 | Children's situation in hotels – what is it (no snacks offered after school etc) | See response to Q2 |
| 3 | Health provision – is it adequate (what kind of skills and training do the providers have, how often is there access to doctors etc) | See response to Q6 |
| 4 | Check what exists for people staying in hotels – is there a welcome to Norwich resource pack in all the hotels, given to all guests, with information about the services in the area and the area, including culture, free resources, health care, in different languages – co develop with refugee groups | See response to Q4 |
| 5 | Much more than housing, how do we signpost people, give them information. Eg can we have signs in city hall in different languages? | See response to Q12 |
| 6 | What kind of workshops go on for people in hostels, council could hold workshops/presentations 'welcome to Norwich', include police – would help stop crime, stop mental health issues. | This is something the Committee may wish to consider |

| | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| 7 | Website does not have enough detailed information on it about the city, or signposts for people from other cultural backgrounds/language (set up a group to review comms to make sure it is accessible) | See response to Q12 |
| 8 | Is there awareness training for council staff in dealing with people that have experience trauma (trauma-led care) especially in housing and benefits services | Training for housing officers in customers who have experienced trauma has recently been introduced |
| 9 | Does the tenancy pack have sections which are appropriate for people from other cultures? | The Council provides translated copies of the tenancy pack as required, but don't have specific sections of this nature |
| 10 | Check around clarity of choice-based lettings and what people are being told. | See response to Q5 and Q12 |
| 11 | Audit communications re housing, check forms, letters etc are suitable for refugees. Check with service user group. | This is something the Committee may wish to consider |
| 12 | Can we set up a service user group to look at provision eg suggest better ways to do things | This is something the Committee may wish to consider |
| 13 | Can we reflect refugee, migrant and asylum seekers stories in our publications and all communications | This is something the Committee may wish to consider |
| 14 | Can refugees, migrants and asylum seekers be encouraged to use city hall and perhaps to shadow councillors if their status means that they cannot stand for election themselves? | This is something the Committee (and Councillors individually) may wish to consider |
| 15 | Can we offer free vouchers for time at our community centres, with support for putting on events etc? | Please see response to Q8 |
| 16 | Can the community enabling team go into the hotels to conduct a needs assessment of the people living there? Or could independent assessors go in? | Please see response to Q13, but this is something the Committee may wish to consider |
| 17 | Refugees and Norwich City Council services – council needs to strive to be more welcoming on a one-to-one basis – proactive use of interpreting, avoiding jargon where possible (this isn't always possible in written communications, but can be done in conversations), making sure that there are alternatives to online services for those who have poor digital literacy, treating other organisations working with refugees as partners | Please see response to Q12 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|--|
| 18 | Education – if people are over 20 there are very limited opportunities for them to access any education: they have the time and they want to do it, but city college is 16-19 only and after that the best they can get for free is a few hours a week here and there. Is there other provision available anywhere? | Please see response to Q9 |
| 19 | Language barrier – have signs in Arabic etc at city hall, and on website and housing forms etc | This is something the Committee may wish to consider |
| 20 | Work experience – set up a dedicated work experience even for a few hours a week through city hall, so that people can get some experience in a workplace. There are many skilled and educated refugees as well as those without qualifications and this can benefit the council and the city. Could NSCL set up a skilled tradespeople's scheme? | Please see response to Q10 and Q11 |
| 21 | People want to work. Give them opportunities for work experience, the chance to get off benefits. Met skilled groundworker, painter and decorator, floor and wall tilers. Desperate to work. | Please see response to Q10 and Q11 |
| 22 | ESOL provision (excluding City College) – New Routes and English+ are doing their best to provide classes for asylum seekers in hotels but there really needs to be funding/infrastructure to be able to offer more and to support people to find the right ESOL class for them. | Please see response to Q7 |
| 23 | Access to sports facilities/fitness classes for asylum seekers – more of this needed – really important for physical and mental wellbeing especially for those in the hotels. | Please see response to Q8 |
| 24 | Issue of full dispersal and how other local councils can play their part – what are the changes that the government are proposing? | This is a matter of government policy |
| 25 | Problem of government approach – lack of notice, lack of funding, lack of joined up approach – can we write to govt asking for clarification and pointing out the problems | This is something the Committee may wish to consider |

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| 26 | Norwich is proud of its record in taking refugees and their successful assimilation – thank the local NGOs | This is something the Committee may wish to consider |
|----|--|--|

