

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 20 March, 2017

Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Social Care and Health

Consideration for Continued Participation in the Syrian Resettlement Programme After Year 1

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Cabinet on the progress of the Syrian Resettlement Programme ("the Programme"), and to request that Cabinet authorises the continued participation beyond the first twelve months of the voluntary scheme.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet agrees the Council's continued participation in the Programme for a further twelve months, to provide accommodation and support to an additional four families in the Vale of Glamorgan, in line with the existing Regional pledge.
2. That Cabinet agree to extend the term of the Collaboration Agreement between the Vale of Glamorgan Council (VOGC) and the City of Cardiff Council (CCC), for a further twelve months from 17th May 2017, to enable the regional delivery of the Programme.
3. That Cabinet authorise the Head of Legal Services to agree the terms of and execute the necessary documentation evidencing the extension of the Collaboration Agreement.
4. That Cabinet agree to extend the term of the Integration and Support Services Contract with Taff Housing Association for a further twelve months, from 17th May 2017.
5. That Cabinet authorise the Head of Legal Services to agree the terms of the extension of the Integration and Support Service contract with Taff Housing Association and to execute the necessary documentation evidencing the extension of the Contract.
6. That Cabinet agree to allow resettled refugee families ("beneficiaries") the option to remain in their existing accommodation at the end of the initial twelve months support (Option 1).

7. That Cabinet supports a proposal to work with a partner Registered Social Landlord to provide leased accommodation, to mirror arrangements in Cardiff, if properties are available.
8. That Cabinet agree to delegate authority to the Director of Environment and Housing Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Social Care and Health, to approve an additional twelve month extension of all Agreements pertinent to the continued delivery of the Programme, following the expiry of the second term, if deemed appropriate.

Reasons for the Recommendations

1. In order to demonstrate the Council's commitment to provide assistance to vulnerable Syrian refugees as a result of the humanitarian crisis, and to offer a place of safety in the Vale of Glamorgan.
2. To continue with the regional Programme which has already proved successful and led to the Council being able to meet its pledge due to the strong partnership and operational arrangements which have been put in place.
3. To enable the completion and execution of the necessary documentation.
4. In order to ensure the necessary orientation and casework support is in place, as required by the Statement of Requirements, and to allow the families to integrate successfully into their receiving communities.
5. To enable the completion and execution of the necessary documentation.
6. To provide much needed stability and certainty to the families already settled in the Vale of Glamorgan and to facilitate their longer term integration.
7. In order to provide a more consistent approach to enable the Council to identify and manage suitable private rented sector properties, for the next families to be resettled in the Vale of Glamorgan.
8. To enable the Programme to continue and to ensure a consistent approach in decision making across the region.

Background

2. In January 2014 the UK Government made a commitment to resettle Syrian refugees who had been displaced to neighbouring countries as result of civil war. In September 2015, UK Government announced an expansion of this commitment and the formation of the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) which is run in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The primary purpose is to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable refugees from the region over the remainder of the current parliament, by May 2020.
3. The UK Government sought participation in the Programme from Local Authorities on a voluntary basis. On 21st September 2015, (C2920) Cabinet supported proposals to take a regional approach to managing the project, and for the Vale of Glamorgan Council to work in partnership with the City of Cardiff Council.
4. The Authorities pledged to jointly resettle up to sixty refugees ("beneficiaries") in the first year, of which, four families were to be accommodated in the Vale and six in Cardiff. It was anticipated that this commitment would be repeated annually for the lifespan of the programme.

5. A Collaboration Agreement (between the Vale of Glamorgan Council (VOGC) and the City of Cardiff Council (CCC)), was signed on 17th May 2016 for an initial twelve month term. The document dovetails with the Integration & Support Services Contract awarded to Taff Housing Association.

Relevant Issues and Options

6. It was agreed at the outset that, subject to the continuation of the Grant, the Authorities may choose to extend both Agreements for two additional twelve month periods upon expiry of the first term.
7. Cabinet authorisation is therefore required for the Authority to continue to participate in the Programme, and to extend the term of each Agreement.
8. The Director of Communities, Housing and Customer Services for the City of Cardiff Council has delegated authority, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health, Housing & Wellbeing, to authorise the extension of all Agreements pertinent to the delivery of the Programme for Cardiff Council. It would be practicable therefore to authorise delegated authority to the Director of Environment and Housing in the Vale of Glamorgan Council, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Social Care and Health to make the decision in order to facilitate a consistent approach.
9. The information contained within this report was presented to the Corporate Management Team on the 1st February 2017, with the following two options which now require a Cabinet decision in relation to accommodation arrangements for families who have been resettled under this scheme in the Vale of Glamorgan:
 - Option1: To allow settled beneficiaries to remain in their current accommodation
10. Where the Authority subsidises rent not covered by Housing Benefits, either the tenants will become liable for any shortfall, or the Authority will continue to subsidise the rent using the funding available for a further twelve months (if this is unaffordable) or until such time as the householder finds employment..
11. If Cabinet agrees to continue to participate in a further round of resettlement over the next twelve months, each Authority will have to make arrangements to secure additional accommodation for the new arrivals.
12. This option is preferred because families are likely to be settled within the area, including children within local schools.
13. The following table illustrates the projected numbers, assuming the Authority continues to resettle 4 families in the Vale of Glamorgan per year, up to 2020.

	Year 1 2016/17	Year 2 2017/18	Year 3 2018/19	Year 4 2019/20	Year 5 2020/21
Cardiff	6	12	18	24	30
Vale	4	8	12	16	20

- Option 2: To require settled beneficiaries to move from their current accommodation.
14. This would alleviate the pressure of finding additional housing, since properties could be used again for further arrivals.
 15. However, landlords would be required to issue notice to their tenants. Step-down support would have to focus on the move-on process, rather than other more aspirational outcomes, such as finding employment. In addition, it will cause

disruption to the families who will have to integrate into new communities and the children may have to move from their current schools where they receive excellent support.

16. Cabinet is asked to support option 1 in so far as it allows families to assimilate more easily into their communities and gives the families a degree of stability whilst establishing support networks and furthering employment opportunities.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

17. In consideration of Option 1 (detailed above), where the Authority agrees to rent subsidisation, based on an assessment of tenant disposable income, it may use the Year 2 onwards funding allocation to meet the cost, within the funding limit available.
18. The first 12 months of a refugee's resettlement costs, excluding economic integration, are fully funded by central government from the Official Development Assistance budget. Participation in the scheme is therefore cost-neutral for the Authority.
19. Under the current Funding Instruction, the Authority is able to claim a tariff per person, according to the following unit costs:

Unit Costs for Syrian Resettlement Programme				
	Adult	Children 5 to 18	Children 3 to 4	Children under 3
Local Authority Costs	8,250	8,520	8,520	8,520
Education	0	4,500	2,250	0

20. The appropriate level of funding is transferred to schools who accept beneficiaries from the relevant age groups. Schools are responsible for recording expenditure for activities such as language support.
21. Funding is available for five years, however, the amount diminishes for each additional year the refugee is in the UK, on the assumption that the most significant costs are incurred in the first year. Year 2 to 5 unit costs are:

13-24 Months (Year 2)	25-36 Months (Year 3)	37-48 Months (Year 4)	49-60 Months (Year 5)
£5,000	£3,700	£2,300	£1,000
22. Therefore no funding is available to support Health or Education in years 2 to 5, as it is assumed that costs incurred will be met by those departmental budgets.
23. There are no set requirements for what local authorities need to provide during refugees' second to fifth years in the UK so as to encourage local authorities to tailor services to refugees' needs.
24. A regional Funding Board monitors the Programme budget, and has carried out a forecast for the first year of the programme. Based on known costs, the programme is likely to be in surplus, however, the Funding Instructions make it clear that Authorities must identify any potential underspend. The Home Office may require immediate reimbursement of underspend, or reduce subsequent payments accordingly.

25. To make best use of the tariff available, and as a means of complimenting support services to improve and widen integration, the Funding Board is considering a range of complimentary activities, including Specialist Mental Health Support; Culture School – orientation workshops; Community/Neighbourhood Activities; Bespoke Employment Support, CV writing and increased ESOL provision.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

26. There are no climate change implications.
27. The main sustainability challenge will be to secure additional suitable accommodation in the Vale of Glamorgan because the Authority made a policy decision not to use social housing, in order to maintain public support and improve community cohesion.
28. There is high demand for private rented accommodation and rent expectations are high in the rural Vale. All accommodation has therefore been sourced in Barry, where rent costs are close to the Local Housing Allowance. If the Cabinet agrees to allow the current cohort to remain in existing accommodation, it will become necessary to source additional housing from the private sector.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

29. The Programme is delivered in line with the legal agreements that are in place between the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Cardiff City Council and Taff Housing Association. It will be necessary for the extension of both agreements to be evidenced in writing.

Crime and Disorder Implications

30. South Wales Police is a member of the Regional Leadership Group and, as a key stakeholder, are closely involved in the vetting of properties used for refugee accommodation. Background checks are carried out to avoid known risks such as localised hate crime and antisocial behaviour. Placements are therefore planned to avoid increasing community tensions.
31. The Police have confirmed that there have been no policing issues to date, and tension monitoring processes are in place to identify situations which could create a risk either to the refugees or the wider public.
32. No refugees resettled through the programme in the Region have been involved as perpetrators of crime, or have created an increased risk to public safety.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

33. Consideration of the cultural, religious and language needs of refugees are at the forefront of the programme delivery. Strategic partnerships have been formed to ensure that beneficiaries have access to the services they require, include housing, health, education and social services. Under the Statement of Requirements, Local Authorities must ensure that beneficiaries of the programme receive language support, through translation and interpretation services, and have access to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes to allow them to carry out basic transactions in the communities in which they've been placed, and to aid their long term integration.

Corporate/Service Objectives

34. This report is consistent with the Corporate Plan 2016 - 20 Well-being Outcome 1: An inclusive and safe Vale.

Objective 2: Providing decent homes and safe communities:

Work with partners to ensure the programme is considerate of local community sensitivities.

Provide appropriate accommodation and support services for particularly vulnerable groups.

Work with the community to develop support networks and improve integration.

Policy Framework and Budget

35. This report is consistent with the Policy Framework and budget and is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

36. This report will apply to all areas of the Vale of Glamorgan and therefore no individual ward member consultation has been undertaken.
37. Through the Regional Leadership Group, key partners, including Social Services, Health and Education, have been consulted with, and have confirmed their full support for an extension of the programme. This support is based on the low impact of the programme, combined with the appropriate levels of funding received to meet any additional demand on resources.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

38. Homes and Safe Communities

Background Papers

Funding to Local Authorities Year 1 Financial Year 2016/17

Funding for Local Authorities in support of the Syrian Resettlement Scheme Years 2-5 for the period 22 September to 31 March 2017

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme - Statement of Requirements

CMT Discussion Paper 240117

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