

**APPROVAL FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE UK RESETTLEMENT SCHEME**

**SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING (COUNCILLOR SUSAN ELSMORE)**

**AGENDA ITEM:12**

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**Reason for this Report**

1. To provide Cabinet with an update on the local and regional delivery of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), which will reach its natural end in March/April 2020.
2. To provide details of the replacement UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), and to recommend that Cardiff Council agrees participate in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan Council.
3. To note that the multi-agency leadership group, initially established to oversee the implementation of the VPRS across the region, will continue to provide strategic governance and oversight for the UKRS. The group comprises and is attended by Members and Officers of Cardiff Council, the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Cardiff University Health Board, South Wales Police, Third Sector and Faith group representatives.
4. To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of People & Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health & Well-being, s.151 officer and Director of law and Governance to make changes to documents as needed for the delivery of the UKRS in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan including, but not limited to, the collaboration agreement with the Vale of Glamorgan and agreement with the Integration and Support Service provider.

**Background**

5. In September 2015, the UK Government announced an expansion of its commitment to support refugees displaced from the Syrian conflict, with the formation of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). The Government pledged to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable refugees to the UK, from the region immediately surrounding Syria, by March 2020, in partnership with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

6. The UK Government sought the voluntary participation of all Local Authorities and put in place grant funding to support the cost of arrivals in the first year, in terms of orientation, health and education.
7. Since 2016, all Welsh Local Authorities have participated in the voluntary programme, by providing accommodation and bespoke integration support to settled refugees ("beneficiaries"). In addition, some Authorities have also received refugees through the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS), which mirrors the VPRS framework.
8. On 17 September 2015, Cabinet approved recommendations to pursue a regional approach to managing the project, under the guidance of the regional multi-agency Leadership Group, in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan Council (Cabinet Decision No. CAB/15/33, Minute No. 40 refers). Cabinet further approved the delegation of authority to the Corporate Director People and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health, Housing and Wellbeing, to progress the detail of the Authorities involvement in the scheme.
9. The report was referred to Council to seek full support for the implementation of the scheme. On 24 September 2015, Council approved the Cabinet report (Item 11) recommendations in full.
10. Based on an assessment of local resources, including the capacity of primary/secondary health care; the availability of school places; and affordable accommodation, the Authorities jointly pledged to resettle up to sixty refugees per year for the lifespan of the programme. The pledge included accommodation arrangements for six families (adults and dependants) in Cardiff, and four in the Vale of Glamorgan.
11. Both Authorities committed to use private rented accommodation only, to mitigate the impact on cohesion for receiving communities, in the context of long waiting lists for social housing and high levels of homelessness.
12. A Collaboration Agreement between Cardiff Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Council was signed on 17th May 2016 for up to three years.
13. In May 2016, Taff Housing Association was awarded a three-year contract to provide bespoke Integration and Support Services to families across the region.
14. On 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019, Cabinet approved recommendations (in full) to continue to participate in the VPRS until March 2020, in line with the lifespan of the programme, and to enter into a new Collaborative Agreement with the Vale of Glamorgan Council for up to six years. (Cabinet Agenda Item 7 refers).
15. Cabinet further approved the recommendation for Cardiff Council to commission a new Integration and Support Service to provide resettlement support across the region for up to six years.

16. Consequently, in September 2019, Taff Housing Association was appointed, following a competitive tender, to deliver the enhanced service which was re-designed to meet the long-term needs of both service users and stakeholders. The new service is delivered via a two-tier mechanism, with a clear focus on supporting people to develop and maintain their independence and to integrate into their host communities.
17. According to official figures released by the UK Government (up to the end of September 2019), the total number of refugees resettled across Wales under the VPRS was 1,219. UK-wide, the total number resettled was 18,252, so the UK Government is on course to achieve its public pledge, with integral support from Local Authorities.
18. Since June 2016, Cardiff Council has received nineteen cases through the ground-breaking resettlement pathway, most of which are families with two or more children, however, we have also supported vulnerable individuals in urgent need of assistance.
19. All have experienced horrific events during the conflict and their subsequent flight to safety, including torture; violence; and loss of family members. Yet, despite these appalling circumstances, each family has settled peacefully into their new communities and begun to rebuild their lives in safety, through coordinated responses from key stakeholders, including third sector and statutory services. The long-term focus remains on supporting the families to take back control over their lives; regain their sense of identity and to realise their aspirations.
20. Assisting those who can work to find sustainable employment is central to that ambition. Many possess characteristics which act as a barrier to the labour market, over and above the ubiquitous communication barrier, so all working age adults are given bespoke employment support. In addition, all beneficiaries have access to English language classes (ESOL). Consequently, several have successfully found paid employment or carried out voluntary work.
21. In July 2016, the Community Sponsorship Scheme was launched, which provided our communities with a meaningful opportunity to become directly involved in the resettlement of refugees. Cardiff Council has consented to the approval of two Sponsorship applications, from Croeso Roath-Cathays and 1FamilyCardiff, and is in communication with other groups that have expressed an interest.  
**Resettlement Post 2020**
22. The civil war in Syria has continued unabated since 2015 and there is no immediate sign of a peaceful ending. Many thousands of people have been either killed or forced to flee to neighbouring countries for sanctuary. Although these "host-countries" have offered vital protection, the length of the conflict coupled with the unprecedented number of refugees claiming asylum has put immense pressure on services and infrastructure, so many simply cannot remain living there. At the same time, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

estimates that 1.44 million people, hosted in over sixty refugee hosting countries, will need to be resettled in 2020.

23. The UNHCR has argued that, with a record number of people fleeing war, conflict and persecution, and without durable political solutions, there is an urgent need for more countries to come forward and offer resettlement places, in a more equitable sharing of responsibility for global crises.
24. In response, the UK Government has renewed its commitment to offer a safe and legal passage to the UK to refugees, with a wider global focus, through the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS).
25. The new scheme will build on the success achieved with current schemes and will seek to consolidate the Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Scheme, Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme and the Gateway Protection Programme. The UK Government aims to resettle up to 5,000 of the most vulnerable refugees (to be identified by the UNHCR), during the first year, with voluntary support from Local Authorities.
26. Community Sponsorship will remain a core feature of the UKRS, however, those who arrive through the pathway will be in addition to the UK Government's commitment to resettle up to five thousand people during the first year.
27. The UKRS will commence immediately following the natural expiry of the current VPRS, when the last of the 20,000 refugees arrives in the UK. Although the scheme will last for one year, initially, there is a firm commitment from the UK Government to continue this model of resettlement beyond 2021.
28. In the first year, most eligible refugees will be from the Middle East North African (MENA) region, however the global focus will broaden thereafter in response to global events. It is anticipated there will be no change in the social demography of the beneficiaries, and that religious, cultural, language and other needs will remain very similar to the VPRS cohort during the first year.
29. Participating Authorities are asked to provide accommodation which is suitable, affordable and sustainable. Cardiff Council will continue to use private sector housing for new arrivals in recognition of the continued pressure on waiting lists for social housing.
30. It is understood the operational elements of the UKRS will remain exactly the same as the VPRS and, in order to receive eligible grant funding, the Local Authority will have to comply with the same "Statement of Outcomes" set out in the previous Local Authority Funding Instructions. The Authority will be required to offer affordable, sustainable accommodation; school places (where required); access to English language (ESOL) tuition; and orientation and integration support.

31. It is intended that orientation and integration support will continue to be provided under the existing service contract, awarded to Taff Housing Association in October 2019, since the mandatory support requirements will remain the same (during the first year) and will therefore entail no change of service.
32. It is intended that all other services commissioned using the VPRS grant funding will continue, leaving no gap in provision for both existing service users and the new cohort.
33. The Regional Resettlement Co-ordinator will continue to administer the resettlement pathway in partnership with key stakeholders and will manage all service contracts to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place, both pre and post-arrival.
34. The Authority, and its key delivery partners, will therefore notice very little change during the first year of the scheme. It is anticipated, however, that future changes to the UKRS scheme, may necessitate a new collaborative agreement, between Cardiff Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Council, and the re-commissioning of integration and support services.
35. Cardiff Council has not sought plaudits for its contribution to the successful realisation of the VPRS, nevertheless, it should be extremely proud of the accomplishment. The UKRS is an opportunity for the Council to continue that work and to share in the global responsibility for providing refuge to those most in need of resettlement support.

## **Issues**

36. In November 2019, the Regional Leadership Group considered a Discussion Paper which set out both the details of the proposed UKRS and the key challenges which might impact successful participation
37. Despite the achievement in delivering the current resettlement figures, with each subsequent year it has proven more difficult to identify suitable, affordable accommodation in a housing market characterised by high demand and high rent expectations. This is the most significant factor, however, the following thematic challenges have also affected beneficiaries and restricted the Local Authority's capacity to participate:
  - Welfare reform, specifically the Benefit Cap;
  - Language barriers;
  - Availability of school places (in some areas);
  - Withdrawal/reallocation of MEAG funding; and
  - Financial independence through employment.
38. Group Members, including the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health and Well-being, acknowledged the operational complexities but offered in principle support to participate in the UKRS, subject to the continued funding from the Home Office. Furthermore, Members agreed the offer of

places, in both Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan, should be explicitly subject to the availability of suitable, affordable accommodation.

39. The new UKRS is for one year only, at present, subject to a spending review. The Home Office has indicated its intention to continue resettlement beyond the first year, however, without a longer commitment it could be challenging for the Authority to commission discreet or bespoke services, including integration support. The stop-start approach is not an effective way to procure services and may discourage some providers from tendering.
40. The Authority has consented to two community sponsorship applications to date, which have each required significant input from a range of stakeholders including housing, education, social services, police and health, both pre and post-arrival. The Local Authority recognises the many benefits to this resettlement pathway and is keen to progress this community partnership, however, no additional funding has been made available to assist with the administrative demands of the scheme. In order to improve local and regional coordination and to better align the sponsorship scheme with existing structures, the Home Office has been asked to consider providing additional funding to Authorities which agree to host community sponsorship schemes.
41. Under the current arrangements, Cardiff Council claims and receives the VPRS grant funding on behalf of both authorities, and arrangements are in place to ensure the relevant funding is transferred to the Vale of Glamorgan Council at the end of each Financial Year. It is intended this arrangement will continue for the UKRS.
42. On a cost share basis, Cardiff Council delivers the following services to all adult refugees across the region, which are anticipated to continue for 2020-21
  - Refugee Employment Support Programme.
  - Informal Conversational English classes from the Central Library
  - Financial administrative support, from the Corporate Grants Officer
43. It is expected the Grant funding will be sufficient to meet the costs associated with resettlement for the duration of the UKRS.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

44. Cardiff Council has contributed substantially to the successful realisation of the VPRS and has robust systems in place to implement the new scheme, which have evolved as our experience and understanding of resettlement has grown. Therefore, the Authority is well placed to participate in the UKRS.
45. A Collaborative Agreement, between Cardiff Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Council, is in place to support regional participation in the VPRS for the lifespan of the programme. Cabinet approved this

Agreement for up to six years, to ensure both Authorities are able to collaboratively meet the needs of all refugees for five years post-arrival. This Agreement will ensure the continuation of all existing operational and administrative structures and full compliance with the terms and conditions of the grant funding for the duration of the new scheme.

46. The Leadership Group is already in place to support delivery of the VPRS, therefore, it is pragmatic to maintain the formal arrangement to ensure the UKRS continues to benefit from the same level of robust governance.
47. The Council's voluntary participation would enable the UK Government to share in the global responsibility to provide a safe and legal route to the UK for some of the most vulnerable refugees, wherever the humanitarian need is greatest.
48. South Police confirmed the small influx of beneficiaries through the VPRS has had no negative impact on community cohesion, therefore, there is no concern about additional resettlement work.

### **Financial Implications**

49. The Directorate expect that the grant funding that will be made available will be sufficient to meet the costs incurred by the Council in participation in UKRS and on that basis there should be no adverse financial implications. This position will however need to be kept under review and confirmed when the Home Office provides details of funding arrangements for 2020/21 and subsequent years.
50. The report recommends that Cabinet approves Cardiff Council's participation in the new, global UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) for the first year of the scheme and to continue the existing collaborative working arrangement with the Vale of Glamorgan.
51. The UK Government has set out its aim to resettle up to 5,000 vulnerable refugees. Initially the new scheme will last for one year although there is a commitment to continue this model of resettlement beyond 2021 subject to a spending review.
52. Whilst it is anticipated that grant funding will be sufficient to meet all costs associated with resettlement during the duration of the UKRS with no additional adverse financial implications, there are other operational difficulties which could impact on the new scheme. These include but are not limited to the availability of suitable, affordable accommodation and the availability of school places.
53. The Authority has consented to two community sponsorship applications with input from a range of stakeholders including housing, education and social services. The Home Office has been asked to consider additional funding for the hosting of such community sponsorship schemes to assist with associated administration costs.

## Legal Implications

54. As set out in the report, the services contract was recently awarded. The contract commenced on the 28th October 2019 and is for an initial period of 2 years with rights to extend on an annual basis for up to 4 years. The contract allows for variation in services provided such variation does not amount to a material change to the specification or scope of the contract. Legal Services are instructed that the proposal set out in the report for the year 20/21 does not require any changes to the services and do not therefore amount to a material change. For future years, legal advice should be taken before proceeding.
55. Legal Services understand, the Services are reliant upon grant funding. The decision maker must be satisfied the proposed way forward complies with the conditions attached to the grant.

## Equality Duty.

56. The Council has to satisfy its public sector duties under the Equalities Act 2010 (including specific Welsh public sector duties) – the Public Sector Equality Duties (PSED). These duties require the Council to have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of ‘protected characteristics’. The ‘Protected characteristics’ are: • Age • Gender reassignment • Sex • Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality • Disability • Pregnancy and maternity • Marriage and civil partnership • Sexual orientation • Religion or belief – including lack of belief.
57. As noted in the report, consideration has been given to the requirements to carry out Equality Impact Assessments (‘EIA’) and an EIA is referred to in the report so that the decision maker may understand the potential impacts of the proposals in terms of equality. This assists the decision maker to ensure that it is making proportionate and rational decisions having due regard to the public sector equality duty.
58. Where a decision is likely to result in a detrimental impact on any group sharing a Protected Characteristic, consideration must be given to possible ways to mitigate the harm. If the harm cannot be avoided, the decision maker must balance the detrimental impact against the strength of the legitimate public need to pursue the recommended approach. The decision maker must be satisfied that having regard to all the relevant circumstances and the PSED, the proposals can be justified, and that all reasonable efforts have been made to mitigate the harm.
59. It is noted that Equality Impact Assessments (which include consideration of views and information obtained through consultation) is in the background papers to this report (Appendix 2). The decision maker must consider and have due regard to the Equality Impact Assessment prior to making the decisions recommended in the report.



## **Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

60. The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ('the Act') places a 'well-being duty' on public bodies aimed at achieving 7 national well-being goals for Wales - a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier, more equal, has cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, and is globally responsible.
61. In discharging its duties under the Act, the Council has set and published well-being objectives designed to maximise its contribution to achieving the national well-being goals. The well-being objectives are set out in Cardiff's Corporate Plan 2019-22. When exercising its functions, the Council is required to take all reasonable steps to meet its well-being objectives. This means that the decision makers should consider how the proposed decision will contribute towards meeting the well-being objectives and must be satisfied that all reasonable steps have been taken to meet those objectives.
62. The well-being duty also requires the Council to act in accordance with a 'sustainable development principle'. This principle requires the Council to act in a way which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Put simply, this means that Council decision makers must take account of the impact of their decisions on people living their lives in Wales in the future. In doing so, the Council must:
- Look to the long term
  - Focus on prevention by understanding the root causes of problems
  - Deliver an integrated approach to achieving the 7 national well-being goals
  - Work in collaboration with others to find shared sustainable solutions
  - Involve people from all sections of the community in the decisions which affect them
63. The decision maker must be satisfied that the proposed decision accords with the principles above; and due regard must be given to the Statutory Guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers, which is accessible using the link below: <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/statutory-guidance/?lang=en>

### **General**

64. The decision maker should be satisfied that the proposal is in accordance within the financial and budgetary policy and represents value for money for the council.
65. The decision maker should also have regard to, when making its decision, to the Council's wider obligations under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

## **HR Implications**

66. There are no HR implications for this report

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is recommended to

1. Approve Cardiff Council's participation in the new, global UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), in order to facilitate the resettlement of vulnerable refugees, for the first year of the scheme.
2. Agree to continue the collaborative working arrangement with the Vale of Glamorgan Council in order to benefit from the sharing of knowledge, experience and resources, including the regional coordination.
3. Agree to extend and support the existing regional Governance arrangements, specifically the regional Leadership Group. Membership comprises key regional stakeholders, including Council Members, Lead Officers and representatives from Housing, Health, Education, South Wales Police, third sector and faith groups.
4. Agree to enable the resettlement of up to six families in Cardiff during the first year, conditional upon the availability of resources, specifically school places and affordable, sustainable accommodation.
5. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of People & Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health & Well-being, s.151 officer and Director of Governance & Legal Services to
  - make changes to documents as needed for the delivery of the UKRS in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan including, but not limited to, the collaboration agreement with the Vale of Glamorgan and agreement with the Integration and Support Service provider and
  - to accept the new funding conditions and
  - generally to progress the regional arrangements for the delivery of the UK resettlement scheme.

<b>SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	<b>Sarah McGill</b> Corporate Director People & Communities
	13 March 2020

*The following appendices are attached:*

**Appendix 1** - UKRS Briefing Note for Local Authorities

**Appendix 2** – Equality Impact Assessment

*The following background papers have been taken into account*

Local Authority Funding Instructions 2019-20  
Leadership Group Stakeholder Discussion Paper November 2019  
Community Sponsorship Guidance for Local Authorities  
Cabinet 17 September 2015 – Report of Director of Communities, Housing &  
Customer Services. Agenda Item 11  
Cabinet 16 May 2019 – Report of Corporate Director of People &  
Communities. Agenda Item 7