

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**26 July 2016**

**Report of the Strategic Director for Economy, Transport and Communities**

**SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME FOR  
DERBYSHIRE**

**Health and Communities**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- To update Cabinet on the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) Scheme in Derbyshire.
- To seek approval for a partnership approach to the scheme and for Derbyshire County Council to act as the single point of contact and lead partner including responsibility for financial arrangements.
- To seek approval for the offer that Derbyshire will be making to the government to take in up to 50 Syrian refugees initially, from November 2016.

**2. Information and Analysis**

In September 2015 the Prime Minister announced that the UK would accept 20,000 Syrian refugees in response to the crisis unfolding across Syria and Europe. Many UK local authorities have already responded positively to the crisis and in Derbyshire agencies have formed a Syrian VPR Partnership Group, chaired by the County Council's Assistant Chief Executive, to look at the viability of a scheme for Derbyshire. The Partnership Group is meeting regularly and is supported by East Midlands Councils.

**East Midlands Councils**

East Midlands Councils is the lead organisation for the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership which was established in 2000 to coordinate activities regarding asylum seekers in the region. Since then its role has progressively expanded to include strategic coordination in respect of all forms of international migration. Those accepted on the Syrian (VPR) Scheme would be processed in one of the existing United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) camps. They are then granted a Humanitarian Protection Visa which allows them to remain in the UK for five years with access to employment and entitlement to benefits. At the end of the five years, if they are unable to return to Syria, they

may be eligible to apply for settlement in the UK. East Midlands Councils is undertaking a regional role of coordinating the arrival of refugees to the region at quarterly intervals. Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottinghamshire districts were the first areas within the East Midlands to take part in the scheme. East Midlands Councils and the Nottinghamshire partnership have shared their knowledge and experience of the scheme so far and Derbyshire has benefitted greatly from this.

### **Funding**

The majority of the costs of the Syrian resettlement are paid directly to education and health. Funding of £20,520 in total per refugee is available to local authorities over a period of five years on a sliding scale from £8,250 in year one down to £1,000 in year five. However, this is not paid until the refugees have arrived in the country and claims are submitted by the relevant local authority in the area in which they are resettled. Funding is to be used for property set up costs, pick up from the airport, pre arrival food, allowance pre benefits, case worker support and the Partnership's co-ordination of the scheme. The County Council would be responsible for the financial arrangements of the scheme and would claim the funding which would then be used to cover the costs of other organisations.

The Council's obligations in relation to the funding are frontloaded in year one, as a requirement of the scheme is the provision of integrated caseworker support for each family for the first 12 months, but with a clearly defined exit strategy. Thereafter, years two to five, allocation of funding is at the Council's discretion and is likely to cover more generic provisions such as English speaking lessons or support to gain employment on a group basis. Any ongoing caseworker support will be on an exception on a case by case basis. The intention is to encourage and support independence and integration and not dependence on local authorities.

Fundamental to resettlement is a focussed programme of support, usually provided by a third sector agency in other areas. Support provided in the initial 12 months is quite intense and enabling and includes tailored case worker support and introduction to the local area, services and amenities. The support service would also provide advice, guidance and training to support the resettlement process. Work is currently being undertaken with County Council Corporate Procurement to develop a specification for a case management and support service with a view to tendering this in due course. The earliest a system could be in place would be October/November 2016. The Partnership Group would also be required to ensure provision of English speaking as a foreign language lessons, which may be commissioned separately as well as interpretation services from the funding.

As such approval is sought to procure the essential support services as described above. The aim will then be to submit a further report to Cabinet in October seeking approval to appoint the preferred supplier.

### **Coordination of the scheme in Derbyshire**

One of the most important learning points from the first wave of authorities involved in resettlement has been the need to adequately resource the coordination and planning role. Partners agreed, in principle, to develop a Syrian VPR scheme and asked that the County Council manages and co-ordinates the development and implementation of the scheme. This also supported the Government's preferred model.

To help shape and design the scheme, and to co-ordinate activity on behalf of the Partnership Group, the Council is recruiting two posts which would form part of the wider Safer Derbyshire Partnership, based at County Hall. On 24 May the Cabinet Member for Health and Communities endorsed the proposal for the Council to act as the co-ordinating body and approved the recruitment of two posts for a period of 12 months initially. These posts are essential to the effective development of the scheme and the total cost for both posts with on-costs for a period of six months equates to approximately £37,000. The costs of these two posts should ultimately be met from national funding paid to local areas. These posts therefore required some pump priming in order to develop and establish a scheme for Derbyshire. To date a commitment of £15,000 has been made towards the costs of these posts by partners, the remaining costs of £25,000 will be covered by the County Council, subject to approval, through the use of underspends in the Chief Executive's Office. Approval is sought to allocate £80,000 from Chief Executive's Office underspend to cover initial costs required but also to underwrite the total costs for the initial 12 month period as a contingency. Any of the funding not required will be returned to General Reserves.

Work has been undertaken to establish potential locations, numbers and size of suitable housing. This was then mapped against the other scheme requirements including access to school places, dentists, GP surgeries, hospitals, benefits offices and post offices. This indicated that up to 12 family units could be resettled in Derbyshire over two phases. Based on this information, Derbyshire, through the Syrian VPR Programme Partnership, is looking to make an offer to government of initially taking 50 individuals over two intakes, following which the Partnership will review the position and possibility for further intakes. It should be noted though that offers of accommodation will be very much based on what is available at the time the refugees are due to arrive.

### **Unaccompanied children**

In early May 2016 the government announced that any unaccompanied children registered in Greece, Italy or France before 20 March 2016 are eligible for resettlement. The government will work with Save the Children and the UNHCR to decide who to take, probably looking at whether the child has relatives in the UK, and if they are the "most vulnerable", at risk of exploitation or abuse in their current situation. Work is currently underway by the County Council Children's Services Department to prepare for unaccompanied children/minors; this will be subject to a separate report to Cabinet.

Due to the overlap issues across all partners regarding the Syrian VPR Programme and the Unaccompanied Children programme and to ensure effective coordination and communication, it is acknowledged that the Partnership Group is a valuable forum and will therefore receive regular updates regarding the County Council's position on unaccompanied children.

### **Partnership Approach**

This is a genuine partnership approach and will succeed by all agencies and key stakeholders working together in collaboration. Derbyshire County Council will lead on strategic communications planning for the VPR scheme and act as a single point of contact for strategic media releases and enquiries involving more than one district and/or borough. Cabinet is asked to note that the report and the approaches and actions outlined in it have been developed with and agreed by the Partnership group.

### **3. Social Value Considerations**

The Syrian VPR scheme will provide a focused programme of support to fully integrate the refugees into their local communities, which will foster positive relationships. East Midlands Councils and the Nottinghamshire partnership have shared their knowledge and experience of the resettlement scheme so far and this will lead to better outcomes for both the refugees coming into the county and the communities where they are being settled. The case management and support services will be procured from a third sector agency and the procurement exercise will consider the economic, environmental and social benefits of the activity, seeking to maximise social value where appropriate.

### **4. HR Considerations**

The posts have been subject to job evaluation and confirmed at grade 12, in line with the HAY job evaluation scheme. The recruitment to these posts will be undertaken in line with the Councils Recruitment and Selection Policy.

### **5. Other Considerations**

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, legal and human rights, financial, equal opportunities, environmental, health and property considerations.

### **6. Key Decision      No**

**7. Call-in** The waiver of call in provisions is not required.

**8. Background papers** Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme for Derbyshire - Report to the Cabinet Member for Health and Communities 24 May 2016.

**9. OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS** That Cabinet:

- Approves the partnership approach outlined and agrees that Derbyshire County Council act as the single point of contact and lead partner for the scheme including responsibility for the financial arrangements.
- Approves the procurement of the essential support services via the Council's procurement process.
- Approves the allocation of £80,000 from the Chief Executive's Office underspend from 2015/16 to provide initial essential funding and to underwrite the first 12 months' cost of the two coordination posts.
- Approves the offer that Derbyshire will be making to the government to take in up to 50 people initially from November 2016.
- Notes the establishment of two posts to coordinate the scheme.
- Notes the approach and report has been developed with and agreed by the Syrian VPR Partnership Group.
- Receives further reports to update Cabinet on progress.

**Mike Ashworth**  
**Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Communities**