

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET – 10 AUGUST 2021  
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

AFGHAN LOCALLY EMPLOYED STAFF RELOCATION SCHEME ACCELERATION

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides information about the accelerated relocation of locally employed staff from Afghanistan.
- 1.2 It explains the request from central government to local councils, in terms of providing a home and resettlement support for up to twelve months via an accelerated programme, namely, the Accelerated Afghan Locally Employed Staff Relocation Scheme (the Scheme).
- 1.3 There is funding provided to support the council if it agrees to participate in the Scheme.
- 1.4 Whilst there is a great deal of pressure on housing locally and a high level of demand, taking account of the pressures currently, officers feel that it would be feasible to offer assistance to a small number of families, with a two-bedroom need.
- 1.5 This is because the demand for two-bedroom accommodation is currently slightly lower than for the other properties that have been requested by government.
- 1.6 The support required to help prepare the properties and to provide resettlement support could be commissioned through a specialist organisation, such as the Refugee Council. This would be funded through the government funding which supports this scheme.

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees to participate in the Scheme and offer help to a maximum of three families, with a two-bedroom need. Cabinet authorises the Head of Community and Housing Strategy to formally notify the Home Office of the Council's intended participation in the Scheme.
- 2.2 Cabinet delegates authority to the Head of Community and Housing Strategy, in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Climate Change, to agree suitable arrangements for the provision of housing, support and any other services necessary for successful implementation of the resettlement scheme – in line with the government's requirements.
- 2.3 Cabinet agrees to waive the Contract Procedure rules in accordance with paragraph 14 (k) (Council's Contract Procedure Rules) for the reasons set out in this report.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 The Secretary of State (s) Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, wrote to local authorities in June 2021 to seek support in the

- accelerated relocation of locally employed staff (LES) who have been supporting the UK in Afghanistan.
- 3.2 The Government has been running a scheme to relocate Afghan former Locally Employed Staff (LES) to the UK since 2013, in recognition of the fact that they are at increased risk of intimidation, having worked side by side with the armed forces and officials.
  - 3.3 Under a new relocation policy launched at the beginning of April, the government assesses that around 1000 Afghan LES and their families may be eligible to apply for 5 years 'Leave to Enter the UK' with a pathway to resettlement thereafter (which means indefinite leave to remain).
  - 3.4 Following the announcement that NATO military forces will withdraw from Afghanistan, the government has accelerated the pace of relocations under the scheme, estimating that preparations should be made to relocate up to 600 families over the summer, with the first of the relocations beginning in the middle of June. They consider these individuals and families to be in significant risk of harm.
  - 3.5 At the present time, the scheme has no cut-off date, and the government is committed to continue to fulfil their obligations to all those who are eligible under it, whenever they decide to apply.
  - 3.6 People coming to the UK under this scheme may arrive either as a whole family unit or with the lead person arriving first and their dependents joining them at a later point, depending on their individual circumstances.
  - 3.7 The scheme is being overseen by the 11 Strategic Migration Partnerships across the UK. A funding package (provided by the Home Office) is available to participating local authorities. Funding includes a package of advice and assistance covering employment, welfare benefits, access to health and education. The ask is for housing and integration support.
  - 3.8 The East of England Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) is coordinating the response to this request. Specifically, they are looking for offers of properties for:
    - **Families made up of 5 or more people.**
    - **Couples with a small child**
    - **Single (men)**
  - 3.9 Ideally the properties should be available for at least one year, to give the families a secure and stable base from which they can get set up in the UK and be supported with integration activities which will lead to paid work. However due to the scale and speed at which the migration may take place, the partnership is happy to consider other options.
  - 3.10 The Local Picture
  - 3.11 To reflect the East of England's proportionate share of the total number of people expected to come to the UK through the scheme, as an aspiration they are looking at accommodating 250 individuals, mostly in family groups, in our region.
  - 3.12 If Hertfordshire districts offer family accommodation for school aged children, the Strategic Migration Partnership will liaise with HCC to ensure that there are schools in the area with spaces for the interpreters' children from September 2021.

- 3.13 Whilst very few qualifying personnel will present with health and social care needs, this information would be shared, if we are asked to house anyone who may have long-term care needs.
- 3.14 The requirement is for any local authority participating in the scheme to provide support for a twelve-month period. Details of what would be expected is set out at Appendix A.
- 3.15 The council does have significant pressure on housing locally but in consideration of the particular pressures, officers are of the view that a small number of two-bedroom properties could be offered to assist with this scheme.
- 3.16 The help and support required to resettle the families could be met through commissioning external support, such as the Refugee Council, which has previously been commissioned to help with the Syrian Resettlement programme. There is a service level agreement that has previously been agreed, which could be reviewed for this purpose.
- 3.17 Subject to agreement of the recommendations in this report, the Refugee Council could provide all the support including meeting and greeting at the airport, clothing, welcome pack of groceries, ongoing advice and assistance with orienteering and acclimatising.
- 3.18 The council would arrange access to a suitable property either in the private rented sector or from the council's housing stock (on a temporary basis) and the Refugee Council could assist with furnishing the property with basic household goods and initial briefing on health and safety matters.
- 3.19 As set out within Section 14 (k) (Council's Contract Procedure Rules) it is recommended that the Contract Procedure Rules are waived due to the specialist nature of this work and the urgency of responding to this need. The Corporate Management Team confirms officers' views that this would be such a case where it would be to the advantage of the Council for its contract procedure rules to be waived.

## **Implications**

### **4 Legal Implication(s)**

- 4.1. Once the council has agreed to provide assistance and has notified the Home Office, it will be required to meet the conditions of the scheme set out by government.
- 4.2. Paragraph 14 (k) of the council's Contract Procedure Rules states "Where the Cabinet agrees a report from a Corporate Director detailing a case where it is to the advantage of the Council that these rules should be waived."

### **5 Financial Implication(s)**

- 5.1 The local authority is provided with funding to support families through a Grant funding arrangement. These grant payments are anticipated to cover the costs of the arrangements for the first 12 months.
- 5.2 The local authority claims an initial payment on arrival and a further payment after the 12-month period has ended. The current rates of support are outlined below:

### 5.3 Twelve Month Funding for beneficiaries arriving.

<b>Accommodation</b>				
Set up and void cost (lump sum)		Per Person (families)	Per Person (couples)	Per Person (singles)
		£1250	£1425	£2850
Rent (up to 12 months)		£15 per person per day		
One night hotel accommodation (arrival)		£50 per person		
Baby Pack (cot, highchair)		£225 per child under two years old		
<b>Integration</b>				
Integration Support Lump Sum		Per Person (families)	Per Person (couples)	Per Person (singles)
		£4500	£6000	£7500
<b>Cash Support</b>				
Weekly cash support rate	Single Under 25	Single Over 25	Couple	Child Under 18 years
	£58.90	£74.35	£117.10	£37.75
<b>Transport</b>				
Transfer from airport		£40 Per Person		

### 5.4 Eight Week funding for dependants joining a family member already settled.

<b>Accommodation</b>			
Set up and void cost (lump sum)		Spouse	Per Child
		£1500	£1500
Rent		Only for large families	
Baby Pack (cot, highchair)		£225 per child under two years old	
<b>Integration</b>			
Integration Support Lump Sum		Spouse	Per child
		£4500	£4500
<b>Cash Support</b>			
Weekly cash support rate (8 weeks)		Spouse	Per child
		£43	£37.75
<b>Transport</b>			
Transfer from airport		£40 Per Person	

## 6 Risk Management Implications

6.1 Reputational: the council could be criticised for providing support with housing for this programme, due to the demand on housing locally. This will be mitigated by the fact that this is a twelve-month package of support, so the housing will not be provided in the longer term. The council has also taken account of the local demand on housing and housing types in reaching the recommendations in this report. Likelihood Low Impact Low

6.2 Financial: the scheme is fully funded by government grant, and this has been sufficient to meet all the costs of resettling the families. Likelihood Low: Impact Low

## 7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)

7.1 All referrals to the scheme are screened by the Home Office.

## 8 Procurement Implication(s)

8.1 Any support service procured to support with this programme is likely to fall within Schedule 3 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and so, be covered under the 'light touch' regime. This means that contracts below £663, 540 are not subject to the full requirements of the Public Contract Regulations 2015. The Council is still required to comply with its Contract Procedure Rules and the general procurement principles of fairness, equal treatment, and non-discrimination.

9 **Climate Change Implication(s)**

9.1 There are no climate change implications

10 **Human Resources Implication(s)**

10.1 There are no human resources implications

11 **Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)**

11.1 The scheme is to assist the relocation and resettlement of Afghan people who may be at risk in their current situation.

12 **Communication and Engagement Implication(s)**

12.1 A communication plan would be drawn up, subject to the agreement of recommendations in this report.

13 **Link to Corporate Priorities**

13.1 This is linked to the Corporate Priority 'A sense of community where people feel safe'.

14 **Equality and Diversity**

14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies. The report seeks authority to engage in a government programme and the government will have carried out an Equality Impact Assessment.

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Background papers to be listed (if applicable)

Appendices to be listed.

## Appendix A

### Support Details

The requirement is for any local authority participating in the scheme to provide support for a twelve-month period. The requirement is to:

- meet the family/individual at the arrival airport and take responsibility for them from arrival.
- provide a twelve-month integration package which includes:
  - ✓ Reception arrangements upon arrival at the airport including handover from flight escorts and welcome briefing.
  - ✓ Accommodation
  - ✓ A package of advice and assistance covering employment, welfare benefits, housing, health, education, and utility supply.
  - ✓ Registration with GPs and local Job Centre Plus including receipt of a National Insurance Number
  - ✓ Assistance in securing school places for school aged children.

Cash support. It should be noted that LES are not eligible for benefits until they can satisfy the Habitual Residency Test set by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) which can take up to 3 months, so the local authority provides financial support to those who arrive under the relocation schemes for up to 4 months.