

EXECUTIVE DECISION

made by a Cabinet Member



REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY BY AN INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

Executive Decision Reference Number – HC2 21/22

Decision	
1	<p>Title of decision:</p> <p>Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) Relocation Schemes July 2021</p>
2	<p>Decision maker (Cabinet Member):</p> <p>Councillor Mrs Vivien Pengelly (Cabinet Member for Homes and Communities)</p>
3	<p>Report author and contact details:</p> <p>Jessica Dann (Community Connections technical Lead – Refugees and Asylum Seekers) jessica.dann@plymouth.gov.uk Tel (01752) 306848</p>
4	<p>Decision to be taken:</p> <p>Agree in principle that Plymouth City Council will support the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and commit to resettling up to 60 people in the first year of the programme (September 2021 –September 2022).</p> <p>Agree in principle that Plymouth City Council will resettle up to 50 people per year for the duration of the Schemes to support the Home Office to meet its target of 20,000 Afghans across a 5 year period. This will be reviewed annually to ensure that we are not placing too greater pressure on the local housing market.</p>
5	<p>Reasons for decision:</p> <p>ARAP and ACRS are Home Office managed migration schemes to relocate both Afghan Civilian Personnel who have been employed by the Ministry of Defence in recognition of their commitment and bravery shown supporting UK forces since 2013 and Afghan Citizens who may be at particular risk because they have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk.</p> <p>Plymouth City Council has resettled 215 refugees through similar Refugee Resettlement Schemes since 2015. Plymouth City Council recognise that: this is a high priority for the Home Office; the Council has previously participated in similar schemes; Plymouth has strong connections with the Armed Forces; and is consistent with the commitment to promote Plymouth as a Welcoming City.</p> <p>Benefits to this approach will balance local priorities such as access to affordable private rented sector accommodation alongside support the Home Office’s objectives of ensuring a safe route of passage for the most vulnerable migrants and retains the corporate values as a collaborative Council who acts fairly and responsibly.</p> <p>The Home Office has proposed a fully funded package for resettlement to support families in their initial three years post arrival to the UK. This is a significant increase in the original funding that was proposed earlier in the year and therefore allows the Council to commit to resettling a greater number of people. Ongoing involvement in these schemes will support the future commissioning of the Refugee Integration Service contract, a service that is essential in maintaining the levels of support for all refugees coming</p>

	<p>into the city. This service will further be able to provide the ongoing support to ARAP and ACRS families beyond the 3-year period funded by the HO.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Alternative options considered and rejected:</p> <p>We could refuse the Home Office's request. However, the scheme, which is now fully funded, has been successful to date and not accepting any further would be contrary to our local values and would not support the national commitment to resettle Afghan Locally Employed Staff and persons at risk many of whom have supported the UK armed forces, often in dangerous and challenging situation. Further, it is not clear whether refusal to co-operate with this scheme may result in the Home Office operating the relocation of those individuals brought to the UK on a no-choice basis with no consultation or veto by Local Authorities.</p> <p>Opting to commit to a smaller number of families would not take advantage of the services already commissioned during previous schemes. If we were to reduce the number of families then existing providers may need to restructure services to reduce current capacity. Similarly if a greater number of families were accepted then local services would be over-stretched and not able to provide the level of support required.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Financial implications and risks:</p> <p>All our costs associated with the scheme have been and would continue to be met by a specific Home Office Funding package. The Home Office has committed to retaining the existing funding provision it uses for other Refugee Resettlement Schemes to support those being relocated by Local Authorities under ARAP and ACRS.</p> <p>Families will be supported for the first 3 years post arrival at £20,000 per person. This is frontloaded in the initial 12 months and then decreases over the subsequent 2 years. The funding can be pooled across the families and LA's are not required to report breakdown spend per family. The tariff automatically becomes available once the family arrives and unless there is a material change in circumstances e.g. the family moves out of area or return back to their country of origin, the Council will be entitled to claim across the 3 year period. Providing the LA can demonstrate that they are meeting the HO requirements for each family at the two evaluation points (Spring/Autumn following arrival) there are no further reporting requirements.</p> <p>The grant funding will be maximised to ensure that all PCC resource providing support has been accounted for. This includes providing employment costs for 1 FTE Grade H Technical Lead (Asylum Seekers and Refugees) in Community Connections plus 20% of time for a finance administrator, 4 days per month business support and 4 days per month management time (Strategic Manager and Service Director).</p> <p>The Refugee Integration Service (RIS) has been commissioned to provide housing; integration and arrival support, deliver English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) provision, support access to the labour market as well as develop community cohesion initiatives. This contract is held by Plymouth Access to Housing (PATH) and is supported by three other providers; REC (Racial Equality Council) START and Open Doors International Language School (ODILS). This ensures that families arriving receive the support they need to integrate on arrival to Plymouth.</p> <p>PCC has opted to accommodate the families within the private housing sector at Local Housing Allowance rates to ensure properties are affordable for families. There are substantial benefits to encourage landlords to participate in the scheme including contribution to minor improvements (e.g. heating/decorating) to ensure the property is fit for rental, void costs to cover council tax and rent whilst awaiting arrival, 2 months' rent in advance and deposit. We have been able to improve the standard of a number of properties in this way having a positive impact on the private rental sector when the families decide to move on. Further funding is available to landlords offering 4+ bed properties to mitigate the impact of the benefits cap and housing improvements required to accommodate a particular need.</p> <p>In addition, core Education costs are being offered to schools accepting children from the scheme and</p>

	<p>Health costs are made available to CCG to support initial health screenings, GP registration and other greater health needs.</p> <p>This funding has been sufficient to cover all foreseeable circumstances and the number of families we are proposing to take provides a good level of contingency to deal with unforeseen issues. Through the RIS contract the City is able to offer support to all refugees in the City, including those receiving leave to remain via the asylum process. There is a greater level of support available to Scheme Families as the grant is ring-fenced, however, it has also enabled service providers to provide a wider service to those in need.</p> <p>Accepting 60 families would generate £1.2m in the first 12months. The funding arrangement therefore underwrites our costs and minimises exposure to financial risks and negative implications.</p>			
8	Is the decision a Key Decision? (please contact Democratic Support for further advice)	Yes	No	Per the Constitution, a key decision is one which:
			x	in the case of capital projects and contract awards, results in a new commitment to spend and/or save in excess of £3million in total
			x	in the case of revenue projects when the decision involves entering into new commitments and/or making new savings in excess of £1 million
		x	is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the local authority.	
	If yes, date of publication of the notice in the Forward Plan of Key Decisions			
9	Please specify how this decision is linked to the Council's corporate plan/Plymouth Plan and/or the policy framework and/or the revenue/capital budget:	This decision is consistent with our corporate values and objectives as a confident council that takes local and global responsibility seriously, and a caring council that promotes social and health equality.		
10	Please specify any direct environmental implications of the decision (carbon impact)	No impact.		
Urgent decisions				
11	Is the decision urgent and to be implemented immediately in the interests of the Council or the public?	Yes		(If yes, please contact Democratic Support (democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk) for advice)
		No	x	(If no, go to section 13a)
12a	Reason for urgency:			
12b	Scrutiny		Date	

	Chair Signature:			
	Scrutiny Committee name:			
	Print Name:			
Consultation				
13a	Are any other Cabinet members' portfolios affected by the decision?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		No	<input type="checkbox"/>	(If no go to section 14)
13b	Which other Cabinet member's portfolio is affected by the decision?	Councillor Downie, Cabinet member for Education, Skills and Children and Young People		
13c	Date Cabinet member consulted	15/07/21		
14	Has any Cabinet member declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	If yes, please discuss with the Monitoring Officer
		No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
15	Which Corporate Management Team member has been consulted?	Name	Craig McArdle	
		Job title	Strategic Director for People, PCC	
		Date consulted	04/10/21	
Sign-off				
16	Sign off codes from the relevant departments consulted:	Democratic Support (mandatory)	DS60 21/22	
		Finance (mandatory)	djn.21.22.128	
		Legal (mandatory)	lt/36998/2/011021	
		Human Resources (if applicable)	N/A	
		Corporate property (if applicable)	N/A	
		Procurement (if applicable)	N/A	
Appendices				
17	Ref.	Title of appendix		
	A	Briefing report for publication		
	B	Equalities Impact Assessment		

Confidential/exempt information								
18a	Do you need to include any confidential/exempt information?	Yes		If yes, prepare a second, confidential ('Part II') briefing report and indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box in 18b below. (Keep as much information as possible in the briefing report that will be in the public domain)				
		No	x					
		Exemption Paragraph Number						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18b	Confidential/exempt briefing report title:							
Background Papers								
19	Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are <u>unpublished</u> works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based. If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.							
Title of background paper(s)		Exemption Paragraph Number						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cabinet Member Signature								
20	I agree the decision and confirm that it is not contrary to the Council's policy and budget framework, Corporate Plan or Budget. In taking this decision I have given due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not. For further details please see the EIA attached.							
Signature	Vivien Pengelly		Date of decision	26/10/2021				
Print Name	Cllr Vivien Pengelly							