

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

UPDATE ON REFUGEE RESETTLEMENTS

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE STRATEGIC HOUSING MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER CLLR SEAN PRENDERGAST

PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST

1. SUMMARY

1.1 To provide Cabinet with an update on refugee resettlement in the district.

2. STEPS TO DATE

2.1 This information note has been produced following the recent conclusion of arrangements for the resettlement of a further two refugee families in the district.

2.2 An earlier information note on asylum dispersal and refugee resettlement schemes was provided to [Cabinet](#) on 13 September 2022.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

3.1 To date this year (2022/23), the Council has received just over 800 approaches for homelessness and housing advice, and owed a legal duty to a further 253 households to help prevent or relieve their homelessness. The Council has also played its role in nationwide efforts to assist refugees fleeing conflict and persecution, resettling a number of refugee families in the district.

3.2 The Council successfully fulfilled a commitment in May 2019 to resettle ten Syrian families (totalling 50 individuals) in the district under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). Recently, in March 2022, the Council has also resettled two Afghan families following the withdrawal of US and UK troops from Afghanistan last year. Schemes including the Syrian VPRS have since been consolidated and replaced by a new, global UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS).

3.3 Cabinet resolved at its meeting on 31 October 2019 that:

(1) the Government's extended refugee resettlement programme be supported;

(2) Cabinet agrees to resettling ten Syrian refugees in North Hertfordshire in the first year of the new global resettlement scheme and authorises officers to make the necessary arrangements to deliver this commitment.

3.4 The UKRS was paused during the COVID-19 pandemic but has now resumed and the Council has sourced two housing association properties suitable for two families of five. However, the Home Office, which is responsible for identifying candidates for resettlement, has only been able to identify one Syrian family of five for resettlement in North Herts, advising there will be a delay before a second family can be identified. As the properties are available for immediate occupation, in place of a second Syrian

family, the Home Office has selected an Afghan family of five, which the Council has now accepted as its second placement under the UKRS, fulfilling its current commitment under the scheme.

- 3.5 This is considered to meet Cabinet's resolutions noted at paragraph 3.3, given the pause to the scheme because of the pandemic, the current lack of Syrian families of five, the global focus of the UKRS and Cabinet's resolution to support the scheme and also the continuing urgent need to resettle Afghan refugees.
- 3.6 As with previous resettlements, daily support will be provided by the Refugee Council with the full cost of resettlement met by the Home Office.
- 3.7 The Council continues to receive a small number of approaches for housing assistance from Ukrainian refugees whose sponsorship arrangements have ended or broken down. Over recent months, we have provided four families with temporary accommodation in the district, with one continuing to remain in temporary accommodation. With over 270 individuals confirmed to have arrived in the district under the Homes for Ukraine scheme and with initial six-month sponsorship periods increasingly coming to an end, this remains a likely source of additional pressure on the Council's housing services.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 The UK Resettlement Scheme is ongoing and further requests for local authority resettlement offers are likely. Cabinet will be informed as details emerge at which point, should Cabinet wish, the previous resolution to house the remaining Syrian family of five can be considered alongside any wider commitments under the UKRS.
- 4.2 Full Council are due to consider a proposal for a new fixed term member of staff to manage resettlement activity (fully funded by the Home Office) as part of the budget process in February 2023.
- 4.3 The Council, together with other district/borough colleagues and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) will continue to monitor the Ukrainian situation closely. HCC has been active in re-matching activity and supporting guests to find alternative accommodation as well as incentivising existing hosts' continued participation and recruiting new hosts. Whilst homelessness legislation will provide a safety net where required, there is a shared purpose in striving to keep reliance on this route to a minimum.

5. APPENDICES

- 5.1 None.

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 6.1 Martin Lawrence, Strategic Housing Manager, martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk, 01462 474250.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Home Office, Refugee Resettlement: Policy Guidance (Aug 2021) [Resettlement \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)