

# Birmingham City Council

## Report to Cabinet

17<sup>th</sup> March 2020



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**Subject:** GLOBAL RESETTLEMENT SCHEME 2020

**Report of:** Professor Graeme Betts  
Director Adult Social Care

**Relevant Cabinet Member:** Cllr John Cotton - Social Inclusion, Community Safety & Equalities

**Relevant O & S Chair(s):** Cllr Penny Holbrook - Housing and Neighbourhoods

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Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 007147/2020		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

### 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the pledge Birmingham City Council will make to the government's new Global Resettlement Scheme. This pledge will commit Birmingham to welcoming 110 refugees over a 12-month period from the summer of 2020. People included in the resettlement scheme will be refugees from a number of different countries, conflicts and humanitarian crises across the world, as determined by the government. The pledge is consistent with the Council's policy commitment of enabling Birmingham to be a City of Sanctuary for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and contributes to the Government's commitment to settle 5,000 refugees across the UK.

- 1.2 The scheme is cost neutral as Government funding will be provided to Birmingham City Council to deliver a range of resettlement support services to each child, young person and adult for a period of at least 5 years. This includes sourcing private rented sector housing, engagement with public services and providing the full range of advice and support refugees need to resettle successfully in the UK. Support will mostly be commissioned from external organisations.
- 1.3 The Government will also allocate funding directly to the NHS via the CCGs to support the health needs.
- 1.4 The government is yet to determine the longer- term position of the UK in relation to further resettlement beyond the first year. Once this information is available, this will be the subject of a further Cabinet Report.

## **2 Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Commits the council to receiving and welcoming 110 refugees included in the government's Global Resettlement Scheme and in doing so approves the preparation of activity to welcome the first arrivals through the new scheme from Summer 2020.
- 2.2 Approves the continued use of private rented sector housing –as an appropriate housing option for accommodating people included in the new resettlement scheme.
- 2.3 Approves the use of Service Level Agreements between the council and CCGs. This is in order to ensure there are adequate services to meet the physical and mental health needs of refugees in the scheme.
- 2.4 Approves the procurement approach for Refugee Welcome and Support Services, as set out in Section 6.4 of the report.
- 2.5 Subject to future government announcements and funding, approves the delegation of the approval of the procurement strategy and contract award(s) via the Delegated Procurement Route (DPR) for up to four years, for Refugee Welcome and Support Services to the Director of Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Corporate Director of Finance and Governance and the City Solicitor (or their nominees);
- 2.6 Authorises the City Solicitor (or their delegate) to negotiate and agree all legal documents to give effect to the above recommendations.

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 Birmingham City Council is committed to enabling Birmingham to be a City of Sanctuary for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. This commitment was first made by the council in 2015 and then renewed at Cabinet in November 2018 and at Full Council in January 2019.

- 3.2 When the council first made its City of Sanctuary commitment in 2015 it also pledged to welcome 550 refugees included in the government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS). Through this scheme the government pledged to resettle 20,000 people who have been displaced from Syria as a result of the conflict there, and by March 2020, both the national commitment and Birmingham's commitment will have been fulfilled.
- 3.3 The SVPRS provides a legal pathway for refugees from their country of origin into the UK, meaning that their status is already settled when they arrive, granting people included in the scheme full access and rights to public services and benefits. Recognising the challenges refugees face in successfully resettling in a new country, the government also provides the council and other local authorities supporting the SVPRS, with funding to provide a range of essential and resettlement services for each person included in the scheme. This is spread over a five-year period and as a result the council's subsequent commitment to the SVPRS will continue until March 2025.
- 3.4 The government intends to start the new Global Resettlement Scheme from summer 2020, though no date has been confirmed. This will follow the last flights being welcomed to the UK through the SVPRS in March 2020. The countries to be included within the scope of the new scheme are still to be decided, but the government has signalled its intention for it to be able to respond to emerging international conflicts and crises. Based on current international displacements from such events it is likely that people from Syria will continue to be included in the new scheme, alongside people from places like South Sudan and Afghanistan, for instance.
- 3.5 The Global Resettlement Scheme will also follow the same model and support which has been provided through the SVPRS. This includes the same flight planning and "case" coordination as currently between the Home Office, regional strategic migration partnerships and local authorities, which has generally worked well in Birmingham. It will also include the same funding offer to local authorities and clinical commissioning groups, which is as follows:
- 3.5.1 £20,520 tariff for each refugee to provide services and support over five years. This is paid to local authorities;
  - 3.5.2 £4,500 additional education tariff (for year one) for children aged 3-18 years. This is paid to local authorities;
  - 3.5.3 £850 additional language funding (for year one) for all adults. This is paid to local authorities
  - 3.5.4 £2,600 funding for health costs incurred for providing health services to all persons included in the scheme. This is paid directly to NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups.
- 3.6 There is now a well-established model and approach for supporting Syrian refugees included in the SVPRS in Birmingham. This continues to develop and evolve but currently consists of:

- 3.6.1 Welcome and support service for people as they arrive in Birmingham and during their first year in the city. This includes a whole range of activity from sourcing private rented sector tenancies, school admissions and enrolment, befriending and English language learning, for instance;
  - 3.6.2 Employability service, working with and assisting people to develop long-term, meaningful employment and career pathways;
  - 3.6.3 Mental health awareness and support, which is raising awareness of the signs of mental health illness and how to access support;
  - 3.6.4 Birmingham Navigator service, which is working with people to connect them to local communities, groups and activities, according to their interests and hobbies and to help people be as socially active as possible;
  - 3.6.5 Welfare and Tenancy Support service to help families to maintain their private rented sector tenancies, including support with personal budgeting.
  - 3.6.6 Community grants scheme to fund additional activities and services, as determined and proposed by refugees and stakeholders in the city. This has included additional English language learning opportunities, arts and culture activities and other social activities.
- 3.7 There are also well-established cross-sector partnerships which the council is part of and plays an important facilitation role in. The same relationships, model and practice will be applied to the new Global Resettlement Scheme.
- 3.8 Now into its fifth year, there are an increasing number of successes from the SVPRS in Birmingham. There are currently 36 children and young people studying for GCSEs, degrees and other qualifications at Birmingham schools, colleges and universities two of whom have graduated. One of these success stories was recently featured in the media. Nour achieved a first-class honours degree in Computer Science at Birmingham City University after having taught himself English in 3 months in order to obtain a university place. As a part of his course, he also designed a congestion sensor that was trialled in the city centre as part of a challenge set by Birmingham City Council.
- 3.9 It also includes a growing number of adults in employment or having set up their own business. There are currently 29 adults in employment/self-employed, 25 adults and young people volunteering and 54 adults attending training/vocational courses. In Autumn 2019, two Syrian refugees, Yousef and Hayan joined forces to set up their own catering business 'Grab 2 Eat' based near the Bullring Markets. They are currently planning the next steps for their business which is to set up a restaurant as a social enterprise to offer training opportunities to help other refugees into employment.
- 3.10 Feedback at monthly "community days" is also very positive with families in the scheme generally happy with the support they have been provided and the quality of their new lives in the city. The community days were established by the council

in Summer 2019 to keep in touch with families, but also to introduce them to the range of activities and opportunities available to them in the city.

## **Challenges for the New Global Resettlement Scheme**

### **Housing**

- 3.11 Despite the positives there have been some pressures identified through the SVPRS, which will also apply to the new resettlement scheme.
- 3.12 This is evidenced by:
- the Council's own waiting lists and numbers of households in Temporary Accommodation awaiting suitable rehousing.
  - The use of the private rented sector continues to be restricted by the numbers of properties available at Local Housing Allowance rates.
  - Use of the private rented sector by SERCO the government contractor responsible for National Asylum Seeker Support dispersal.
  - Delays in government policy ruling relating to increased regulation for the exempt sector is continuing to have significant impacts in terms of the availability of private properties at LHA rates.
- 3.13 Under the current SVPRS programme, funding is available to cover housing costs which are slightly higher than LHA rates. Using the SVPRS budget, the council covers 100% of LHA shortfall costs for years 1-3 of the scheme and covers 50% of the shortfall in years 4-5. Likewise, the council covers 100% of benefit cap shortfalls for year 1. However, as families move through the resettlement programme they are needing to make additional financial contributions to their rent to meet the gap between the rent and LHA. In a small number of cases the council is making hardship payments using the SVPRS funding, to cover this gap where families are unable to afford those payments alongside welfare, budgeting and tenancy support services.
- 3.14 There are also specific issues with sourcing private rented sector properties which can be adapted to meet the sometimes complex needs of families. To date, out of 117 Private Rented Sector properties, 8 have been adapted at a total cost of around £15,000 which has been claimed back from the Home Office. The need for specific adaptations has resulted in 4 applications to social housing providers including Birmingham City Council. Any adaptation cost will be covered directly by central government as part of the resettlement scheme.
- 3.15 In the long-term this is creating risks and concerns about the sustainability of tenancies and potential risk of homelessness due to rent arrears, particularly when refugees exit the scheme. The first group of SVPRS refugees won't exit the scheme until December 2020 (5 years after the first arrivals). Utilising the SVPRS funding the council is putting plans in place to address, potential welfare and on-going support that may be required once families start to exit the scheme including

the introduction of a crisis fund to support those families who may continue to struggle.

- 3.16 In addition, a letter from all of the Metropolitan authority leaders has been sent via the West Midlands Strategic Partnership to the Home Secretary challenging the cost of asylum dispersal on the region and the additional associated housing pressures this has placed on the city.

### **Health**

- 3.17 There is currently a process in place which enables liaison between CCGs and the council in order to accept cases. This includes the exchange of medical files for onward referral for specialist treatment and for the allocation of GP practices. There are limitations to the current approach in the city in terms of evidencing that any specific health needs are being met or, if the funding is having a positive impact and is directed to reflect the changing patterns of resettlement in different parts of the city.
- 3.18 However, in preparation for the Global Resettlement Scheme dialogue has started with the CCGs to explore patterns of current need and to develop a more targeted approach to health funding where required. This will also enable health and social care partners to develop an evidence base for any longer-term funding requirements from the Department of Health.

### **Social care**

- 3.19 Numbers accessing social care are low and relate to adult and children's social care requirements for assisting with physical health and a provision of awareness and support to victims of domestic abuse. The council can claim any costs relating to these services back from the Home Office.

### **Options considered and Recommended Proposal**

The options considered are as follows:

- 3.20 Not to support the new Global Resettlement Scheme. However, this would not be consistent with the council's City of Sanctuary policy commitment.
- 3.21 If applying Birmingham's share of the national population to the new resettlement scheme, this would make a pledge of welcoming 85 of the 5,000 refugees to be included in the scheme nationally.
- 3.22 Keeping in line with the current SVPRS scheme and welcoming 110 refugees. (SVPRS pledge is 550 over 5 years)

## **4 Consultation**

- 4.1 There has been consultation on the contents of this Cabinet report with the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills & Culture, the Cabinet Member for Homes & Neighbourhoods and with the Cabinet Member for Health & Social Care who are

content with the report. This has been accompanied by ongoing discussion with officers from Housing to help inform the scope, limitations and possibilities of housing options for refugees in the new resettlement scheme.

- 4.2 There have been two workshops with external stakeholders to inform the council's potential involvement in and pledge to the Global Resettlement Scheme. The first of these took place on 15<sup>th</sup> November involving groups and organisations which have contributed to the SVPRS. The key points to emerge from that workshop were:
- Recognition that the current SVPRS model is working well and should be applied to the new scheme;
  - Recognition that access to housing and appropriate health services was crucial to the successful delivery of any future commitment.
  - That the city does have the capacity to accommodate a pledge similar to SVPRS.
- 4.3 The second workshop took place on 19<sup>th</sup> November involving people with lived experience of being a refugee and successful resettlement in the city over the last twenty years. Similarly, issues were raised in relation to recovery from trauma, use of counselling and other mental health and wellbeing. Accompanying this with opportunities which can enable social participation and prevent people from becoming lonely and isolated, which can prevent people's recovery.
- 4.4 Some of the participants also felt that the City was not making the best use of the skills, attributes, qualifications and experiences of refugee communities whilst others felt that Birmingham had provided them with the opportunities through education and employment to rebuild their lives in the city. To address this, an employment support service was commissioned to work with SVPRS refugees to help realise career ambitions. A similar service will be commissioned to support the Global Resettlement Scheme too.
- 4.5 This requires greater recognition of these positives, and the Council (and other organisations) taking a greater role to provide a platform which can promote success stories and role models, as well as connect people. The Refugee Engagement and Communications Officer (existing post) in the Refugee and Migration Team will be able to assist in providing this platform.

## **5 Risk Management**

- 5.1 There are existing pressures on some neighbourhoods, health and social care services, housing supply and schools which the new resettlement scheme may add to. However, these would be offset certainly for a period of up to five years by ensuring that funding provided by the new resettlement scheme is invested in schools, health and appropriate housing options and in community activities and groups to promote community cohesion.
- 5.2 As much of the services and support in the new scheme will be commissioned from external providers, there will be typical risks around service failures from those

providers. However, the tendering and evaluating processes applied by the council, as well as the subsequent contract and relationship management through the council's refugee and migration team will ensure these risks are minimised and recognised early where they may emerge. It is important to note that there have been no service failures in the contracts awarded to external providers through the SVPRS.

## **6 Compliance Issues:**

### **6.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?**

6.1.1 The decision is consistent with the Council's City of Sanctuary policy statement, which was approved by Cabinet on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

### **6.2 Legal Implications**

6.2.1 Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, a local authority has the power to take action which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions and therefore has a general power to enter into contracts for the discharge of any of its functions. Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2000 gives the Secretary of State power to award grants to local authorities for expenditure incurred by them in the provision of welfare services determined by the Secretary of State.

6.2.2 There are no other legal implications from the decisions recommended to Cabinet. As the refugees within the new scheme will have a legal right to reside in the UK for up to five years, including full access to public services and benefits, there are no negative implications resulting from the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 and the Immigration Act 2016 which the council will need to consider.

### **6.3 Financial Implications**

6.3.1 The new scheme would be cost-neutral to the Council with the government providing funding for each person included in it. This will be claimed as a tariff and include:

6.3.1.1. £20,520 tariff for each refugee to provide services and support over five years.

6.3.1.2. £4,500 additional education tariff (for year one) for children aged 3-18 years. This is paid to local authorities;

6.3.1.3. £850 additional language funding (for year one) for all adults. This is paid to local authorities

6.3.2 The exact amount of funding the Council will receive cannot be determined until all the households included in the new scheme have arrived in the city – which is when the profile of children, young people and adults will be known. However, based on the existing SVPRS it is likely that approximately half the people accepted onto the new scheme will be children or young people. The



subsequent estimate for funding received by the council for the new scheme would be approximately £2.6million (based on a pledge of 110). This would be issued by the government (via the Home Office) to the council over a five-year period for each person in the scheme until the summer of 2026. All costs associated with this scheme will be covered using the Home Office tariff and the authority will look to contain costs within this funding envelope for the duration of the scheme. After funding ceases, any on-going social care costs for those granted permanent leave to remain will need to be picked up by the Council.

## **6.4 Procurement Implications**

- 6.4.1 The current Govt. commitment to this scheme has been confirmed for one year of arrivals only. Due to this uncertainty, a contract variation will be issued to the current provider Refugee Action, once a pledge is confirmed. This will ensure smooth delivery of the Global Resettlement Scheme enabling the city council to receive refugees once the scheme commences.
- 6.4.2 The Council currently contracts with Refugee Action to provide the welcome and support service for Syrian refugees in the SVPRS. That contract is in place until March 2021, reflecting the 12 months of support provided to refugees who will be arriving up to March 2020. There will be many similarities between the service provided through the SVPRS and the Global Resettlement Scheme, because it is a well-established and functioning model.
- 6.4.3 The value for the contract variation for Year 1 services will be £784,743 (based on a pledge of 110 individuals) and is within contract variation threshold as set out in the Public Contract Regulations (PCR), 2015. This figure will vary depending on the pledge agreed. This figure is based on the current contract unit cost of £7,134.03 per individual.
- 6.4.4 In anticipation of the government extending that commitment to over one year, a procurement approach using the delegated authority route will be used to award a contract for the delivery of Refugee Welcome and Support Services for the remainder of the scheme. This will be conducted via the Open Procedure, with a contract for potentially a further four years (depending on Govt announcements).

## **6.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)**

- 6.5.1 To support the new scheme the Council will need to recruit a full-time Commissioning Officer. This new member of staff would be funded on a fixed term basis from the funding received through the scheme from the Home Office. They would be based in the Refugee & Migration Team (in Adult Social Care and Commissioning). A competitive recruitment process will be adopted to recruit to posts in line with the Council's Recruitment and Selection policy.

## **6.6 Public Sector Equality Duty**

6.6.1 An initial screening process ref EQUA464 has been undertaken under and is attached as **Appendix 1**

## **7 Appendices**

7.1 **Appendix 1** - EQUA464

## **8 Background Documents**

8.1 Birmingham City Council Plan: 2018 -2022

8.2 City of Sanctuary Policy Statement (November 2018)