

Rother District Council

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 4 October 2021

Title: Afghan Resettlement Update

Report of: Joe Powell

Cabinet Member: Councillor Terry Byrne

Ward(s): All

Purpose of Report: To update Members on the details of both the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

Decision Type: Non-Key

Officer

Recommendation(s): It be **RESOLVED:** That

- 1) the Government funded integration package for both the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) be noted;
- 2) the progress of the Council in successfully meeting its commitment to resettle two families under the ARAP be commended; and
- 3) the intention of the Council to join the county-wide commitment to resettling 200 families under the ACRS be noted.

Reasons for Recommendations: To update Members of the ARAP and the ACRS that are wholly funded from external grant from the Home Office.

Introduction

1. The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) was announced in spring 2021. The project aims to resettle Afghan locally employed staff who have worked alongside British forces in Afghanistan in the UK, following NATO's decision to withdraw military forces from the region. Nationally, the programme aims to resettle 3,000 people (approximately 600 families) before September. Local authorities are being encouraged to participate in the scheme, by offering to resettle families in their areas *through private rented accommodation*
2. The local authorities in East Sussex have committed to the following target for the programme:

Local Authority	Number of families
Eastbourne	2
Hastings	2
Rother	2
Lewes	1
Wealden	1
Total:	8

3. Due to the ongoing unrest in Afghanistan, the Government has announced a separate Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) to support vulnerable people displaced by the conflict. The national scheme has seen the UK Government make a commitment to resettling 5,000 households in year one and a further 15,000 in the years beyond. The local housing authorities and wider partners in East Sussex are minded to commit to resettling 200 individuals.
4. The people and families that will be resettled under the ACRS will be vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT+). Some of those who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme, which included individuals who were considered to be at particular risk – including women's rights activists, prosecutors and journalists – will be the first to be resettled under the ACRS.
5. Members will be aware that the Council (alongside its partner agencies and community and voluntary sector groups) has experience of resettling those displaced by conflict in Syria under what has now evolved into the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS). The Council has successfully resettled 8 families under the scheme over a five-year period and it is well placed to meet its share of the national commitment made by the UK Government under the ACRS.
6. The funding awarded under the existing UKRS has comfortably met the costs of operating the scheme to local housing authorities. The funding announced for the ACRS and ARAP are comparable to the existing UKRS and officers are therefore confident that the costs of operating the new Afghan schemes will also be met by integration package of funding from Government.

Integration package for Afghan citizens

7. Those arriving through the ARAP and ACRS will be granted immediate Indefinite Leave to Remain allowing them to benefit from full rights and entitlements and providing them with the certainty and stability they need to build their life here.
8. In addition, the funding integration packages for both the ARAP and the ACRS have now been aligned, to provide a core local authority tariff of £20,520 per person over 3 years. The amount is equivalent to the per person tariff under the Syrian resettlement schemes. There is also funding available in addition to the core tariff:

ACRS	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
LA Tariff (per person)	£10,500	£6,000	£4,020	£20,520
Education (per child)	Up to £4,500			Up to £4,500
English language (per adult)	£850			£850
Health (per person)	£2,600			£2,600

9. In addition, a further £20m fund of flexible funding in the current financial year (2021/22) has been made available to support local authorities with higher cost bases with any additional costs in the provision of services.
10. Further funds of £10million is being made available to meet housing costs in year 1 of the scheme to support the resettlement of the initial 5,000 person target. The fund will fall to £5million in year 2 and £2million in year 3.

Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)

11. East Sussex local housing authorities have discussed an indicative target to resettle 200 individuals across East Sussex through the ACRS programme. The rationale being that this represented 1% of the 20,000 Government commitment and the population of East Sussex represents 1% of the total population of the UK. This is the same criteria which was used when resettling Syrian refugees and enables East Sussex to demonstrate to Government and the local community that it is ready to play its part in the overall programme proportionate to its population size and available resources.
12. An operational steering group has been established by the local housing authorities in East Sussex to oversee preparations for the new programme, bringing together partners from across housing, health, education, social care, and the community sector. The aim of the task and finish group is to build on existing good practice through the UKRS and identify potential capacity gaps within partner services.
13. Given the significant and increasing pressure on housing and homelessness services across the county, exacerbated by the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is proposed that accommodation for the scheme should be sourced where possible from the private rented sector and not the social housing sector. This is considered important in respect of community cohesion and the longer-term support for the scheme and its success locally.

Conclusion

14. The Council has shown a strong commitment to previous UK Government funded resettlement schemes and has offered a place of sanctuary and safety for those displaced by the conflict in Syria. The Council is proud to have met its share of the national commitment under the Syrian resettlement initiatives and the Council

is well placed to meet the commitment already made under the ARAP. The Council is equally in a position to meet its share of a county-wide commitment to resettling 200 households across East Sussex.

15. Both the ARAP and ACRS will draw on the arrangements put in place for the previous scheme to resettle Syrian refugees and are transferable to the Afghan schemes. Support for the new schemes can be delivered by the existing team, utilising the existing partnership arrangements and this is proposed.

Financial Implications

16. Both schemes are cost neutral to the Council. Costs will be demand led and claimed back from central government under the terms of a formal grant agreement.

Legal Implications

17. None

Human Resource Implications

18. We are advertising a new role within the existing UKRS team at Rother to support the delivery of the afghan resettlement schemes.

Environmental

19. The accommodation purchased will be offered to tenants with the following standard: EPC E or above., the minimum required to rent a property. Landlords will be encouraged to maximise their EPC rating. The housing will comply with Health and safety standards for rented homes (HHSRS) and Decent Homes Standard.
20. The Council must in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to;
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, pursuant to s149 Equality Act 2010.

This is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	Yes
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	Yes	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	No	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

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Appendices:	None
Relevant Previous Minutes:	
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None