

Cabinet
2nd September 2021

Title: Use of Delegated Powers - Afghan Relocation Assistance Programme (ARAP)

Lead Officer: Lisa Barker, Head of Housing Services and Elaine Wallace, Housing Needs Manager

Portfolio Holder: Jan Matecki

Public report / Confidential report: Public Report

Wards of the District directly affected: All

Contrary to the policy framework: No

Contrary to the budgetary framework: No

Key Decision: No

Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: No

Consultation & Community Engagement: No

Final Decision: Yes

Accessibility checked: Yes

Officer/Councillor Approval

Officer Approval	Date	Name
Head of Service	13.09.21	Lisa Barker
CMT	13.09.21	Chris Elliott
Section 151 Officer	13.09.21	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	13.09.21	Phil Grafton
Portfolio Holder(s)	13.09.21	Councillor Jan Matecki

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to accept the resettlement of up to 25 families in Warwick district under the Afghan Relocation Assistance Programme (ARAP)
- 1.2 Following the announcement that NATO military forces have withdrawn from Afghanistan, the UK government has requested that local authorities help accelerate the pace of relocations under the ARAP, to provide a safe haven for those relocated through the scheme.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the decision to resettle up to an additional 25 families in the District via the Afghan Relocation Assistance Programme (ARAP).

- 2.2 Note that this commitment is dependent on the continuation of the properly funded arrangements from Home Office being in place to manage and settle the households via Warwickshire County Council resettlement support team.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 As the situation in Afghanistan has worsened, officers within Warwickshire Districts and Boroughs have continued to have discussions to understand the help that can be given locally both in terms of housing provision and from the support which is provided by Warwickshire County Council. The escalation of events showed that the assistance needed to be accelerated and increased.
- 3.2 Our pledge to rehouse Afghan nationals would be increased from the original pledge of one family to up to 25 families who on arrival will be granted immediate leave to remain in the UK. This happily reflects the concerns and support offered verbally across the Council when this issue was considered in August.
- 3.3 Warwickshire County Council (WCC) receive government funding for this work to ensure that they have sufficient resources to support all new Afghan family arrivals across the county.

4. Policy Framework

4.1 Fit for the Future (FFF)

- 4.1.1 The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several key projects.
- 4.1.2 The FFF Strategy has 3 strands – People, Services and Money and each has an external and internal element to it. The information below illustrates the impact if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

4.1.3 External impacts of proposal(s)

People - Health, Homes, Communities - Housing needs will be met.

Services - Green, Clean, Safe – Afghan staff and families fleeing conflict and intimidation. Therefore, by providing accommodation and support it enables those families to be safe.

Money- Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment – None

4.1.4 Internal impacts of the proposal(s)

People - Effective Staff – Support workers are employed by WCC to help resettle the families and provide ongoing support as is needed for period of 12 months.

Services - Maintain or Improve Services – None

Money - Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term - None

4.2 **Supporting Strategies**

Each strand of the FFF Strategy has several supporting strategies. The includes the Homeless strategy and positively contributes to the Housing and Health-and-Wellbeing priorities. It also contributes to the

4.3 **Changes to Existing Policies**

No changes to existing policies are proposed.

4.4 **Impact Assessments**

An impact assessment has not been completed as this report is about the Council's involvement in supporting vulnerable families, via a Government resettlement scheme.

5. **Budgetary Framework**

- 5.1 Full funding is provided by the Home Office directly to WCC to administer the scheme. WCC will pay the Council directly which will fully offset the rent and any associated voids costs. There will be no negative financial impact to the Council from partaking in this scheme.

6. **Risks**

- 6.1 If the long-term Government funding is less than expected WCC will review with the Districts and Borough Councils in Warwickshire how many families, they are able to support.

7. **Alternative Option(s) considered**

- 7.1 In June 2021, the Council received a letter from MHCLG seeking support in the accelerated relocation of locally employed staff (LES) who have been supporting the UK in Afghanistan. All Councils were asked to support the Afghan LES Relocation Scheme. Consideration was given as to whether support should be given or not. It was agreed that to refuse acceptance of a family for relocations was not a desired option.
- 7.2 The resettling of higher numbers of households was considered however WCC advised us at that time that their teams were at capacity at that time and could not support additional families. WCC has now acquired additional

resources and therefore will be able to support the increased number of placements across the county.

8. Background

- 8.1 The government has been running a scheme to relocate Afghan former LES (Locally Employed Staff) to the UK since 2013, this is in recognition of the fact they are at increased risk of intimidation having worked side by side with UK armed forces and officials.
- 8.2 Following the announcement that NATO military forces will withdraw from Afghanistan, the UK government intends to accelerate the pace of relocations under the Afghan LES scheme. The government is asking for support from Local Authorities to provide a safe haven for those relocated through the scheme.
- 8.3 On entering the UK from a "red list" country a period of 10 days will be spent in quarantine in a managed hotel due to the government's Covid 19 requirements.
- 8.4 Local Authorities are responsible for providing a twelve month integration package which includes:
 - 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
- 8.5 WCC will ensure all families arriving in Warwickshire are welcomed through the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) support team. The families will receive the recommended levels of support from the UKRS support team and partners, this will include:

Requirement	Who responsible?
Reception arrangements upon arrival at the airport including handover from flight escorts and welcome briefing	UKRS Support Team
Accommodation Quarantine Hotel Bridging Hotel	UKRS Support Team for the quarantine hotel and for placements to the bridging hotel. Top tier authorities responsible for support within the bridging hotel.
Accommodation in Social Housing or the Private Rented Sector	District and Borough Housing working with WCC.

A package of advice and assistance covering employment, welfare benefits, housing, health, education and utility supply	UKRS Support Team
Registration with GPs and local Job Centre Plus including receipt of a National Insurance Number	UKRS Support Team/ DWP/CCGs
Assistance in securing school places for school aged children	WCC Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS)
Cash support.	UKRS Support Team will administer the cash support

- 8.6 Suitable properties will be identified from the Council's own stock and a request was made for a direct let of accommodation to the Head of Housing in accordance with the Council's published Housing Allocations Scheme. In the case of Private Sector lettings inspections to ensure suitability will be undertaken by the Private Sector Housing Team and affordability assessments will be undertaken by the Housing Options Team. Other Registered Providers have also indicated their support in identifying settled accommodation