

Executive  
22 April 2021

**Title: United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme**  
**Lead Officer: Lisa Barker, Head of Housing Services and**  
**Mark Lingard, Private Sector Housing Manager**  
**Portfolio Holder: Jan Matecki**  
**Public report / Confidential report: Public**  
**Wards of the District directly affected: Not known at this stage**

Contrary to the policy framework: No  
 Contrary to the budgetary framework: No  
 Key Decision: No  
 Included within the Forward Plan: Yes  
 Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken: No  
 Consultation & Community Engagement: No  
 Final Decision: Yes  
 Accessibility checked: Yes

### **Officer/Councillor Approval**

<b>Officer Approval</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	30/03/21	Bill Hunt
Head of Service	09/03/21	Lisa Barker
CMT	30/03/21	Chris Elliott
Section 151 Officer	30/03/21	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	30/03/21	Andrew Jones
Finance	09/03/21	Andrew Rollins/Victoria Bamber
Portfolio Holder(s)	25/03/21	Councillor Jan Matecki

## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) for refugees, which replaces the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS). It proposes to accept a further number of families to be resettled within Warwick district under the new scheme.

## **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that Executive:

- 2.1 Note the work undertaken during the previous SVPRS.

- 2.2 Approve the resettlement of a further four refugee households under the new UKRS, between April 2021 and 31 March 2025.
- 2.3 Note that this commitment is dependent on the continuation of the properly funded arrangements being in place to manage and settle refugees.

### **3. Reasons for the Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Council has successfully resettled six Syrian refugee families under the previous resettlement programme (SVPRS).
- 3.2 Local authorities in the UK have been asked by the Home Office to make pledges as to how many refugee households they can settle within their areas under the new resettlement programme (UKRS). Our pledge is in line with the majority of other Warwickshire District and Boroughs. Levels have been agreed with WCC to ensure that they have sufficient funding to support all new arrivals across the county.
- 3.3 Warwickshire County Council (WCC) receive the government funding for this work and the current budget is in a financially strong position. The longer term funding, beyond the 2021/22 financial year, is dependent on the outcome of the Government's spending review. This should be known by the time of the Executive meeting.

### **4. Policy Framework**

- 4.1 Fit for the Future (FFF)

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.

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 of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

#### **4.2.1 External impacts of proposal(s)**

**People - Health, Homes, Communities** - Housing needs for all met.

**Services - Green, Clean, Safe** – Refugees are often fleeing incidents of conflict and therefore by providing accommodation and support, enable those families to be safe.

**Money- Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment** – None

#### **4.2.2. Internal impacts of the proposal(s)**

**People - Effective Staff** – Arabic speaking support workers are employed by WCC to help resettle the families.

**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. Improving housing standards in residents' homes directly and positively contributes to the Housing and Health-and-Wellbeing priorities. It also contributes to the Housing and Homelessness Strategy objective of improving the management and maintenance of existing housing.

### 4.3 Changes to Existing Policies

Under the previous refugee resettlement scheme (SVPRS) families were housed in the private rented sector. The high rental value of properties in Warwick district has meant that after the initial two-year rental support from the project ends, the properties become unaffordable for most of the families and they are having to be rehoused through the Council's Home Choice scheme. Therefore, it is proposed that under the new refugee scheme (UKRS) the families will be housed immediately in the social sector to give them the security and stability they need to rebuild their lives.

### 4.4 Impact Assessments

An impact assessment has not been completed as this report is about the Council's continued involvement in supporting vulnerable refugees, via a Government resettlement scheme. Its focus is therefore upon providing a stable home to this cohort who are amongst the most vulnerable and disenfranchised populations in our society.

## 5. Budgetary Framework

- 5.1 The finance is provided by the Home Office directly to WCC to administer the scheme.

## 6. Risks

- 6.1 The Government funding for the financial year 2021-22 has already been confirmed. The outcome of the Government spending review for the long term funding for the UKRS should be known by the time of the Executive meeting. If the long term funding is less than expected WCC will review with the Districts and Boroughs in Warwickshire how many families, they are able to support.

## 7. Alternative Option(s) considered

- 7.1 The authority could choose not to re-settle any further refugees. However, this stance is likely to come under pressure from local groups supporting the new resettlement scheme and the broader humanitarian situation.
- 7.2 The resettling of higher numbers of households was considered but this would detract from the Council's ability to house homeless families and others in housing need in the District.

### **8. Background**

- 8.1 The Government asked local authorities in March 2016 to consider assisting with the resettling of Syrian refugees, to help it meet its commitment of finding homes for 20,000 refugees by 2020.
- 8.2 Warwick District Council successfully met its commitment to rehouse five families under the SVPRS. Then at the end of 2018, sought to assist **up to** a further five families in the remaining life of the scheme.
- 8.3 Whilst the scheme was originally going to run until 2020 the Home Office brought forward the timescale, so the SVPRS ended in December 2019. This severely restricted the ability to assist further families. However, one further family was rehoused in Warwick district.
- 8.4 When the decision was taken to help meet the Government target under the SVPRS all the Districts and Boroughs in Warwickshire agreed to house the refugee families in private rented accommodation.
- 8.5 It has now become clear that when the two-year rental support, provided by WCC from the Home Office funding, ends the high rental values of properties in Warwick district means that they become unaffordable. The families are then having to be rehoused through the Council's Home Choice scheme.
- 8.6 Three of the six families resettled under the SVPRS have already been rehoused in the social sector and two of the remaining three families will need rehousing through the Home Choice scheme in the near future.
- 8.7 The obligation under the Home Office funding is to arrange accommodation for arriving refugees which meets local authority standards, ensure that this will be available on their arrival and is affordable and sustainable.
- 8.8 To resolve the affordability issue and to provide secure and sustainable accommodation for the refugee families, it is proposed that under the new UKRS a total of four families over a four-year period will be resettled in the social sector.
- 8.9 In June 2019 the Government confirmed its ongoing commitment to resettle refugees in the UK, announcing plans to introduce a UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) in 2020, with the aim to resettle around 5000 refugees in the first year, this date was revised to commence in 2021 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 8.10 The UKRS will remain focused on supporting the most vulnerable refugees and it is expected that the nationalities of refugees resettled may change in response to world events.
- 8.11 The Home Office have committed to continue to work closely with local authorities as the profiles of those resettled change to ensure refugees are matched to housing availability in areas that can provide appropriate support.