

## Report of Head of Housing Support

### Report to Director of Environment and Housing

**Date:**

**Subject: Syrian refugee housing programme**

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

## 1.0 Summary of main issues

- 1.1 The Executive Board gave approval on 23 September 2015 for Council officers to liaise with the Home Office in respect of resettling 200 Syrian people, who have fled to countries neighbouring Syria, over the next two years.
- 1.2 The report sets out the Housing Leeds response, led by Housing Support, to the resettlement of the 200 people; which will be part of a wider programme of integration support. It is anticipated that the 200 people will comprise approximately 50 households and therefore a requirement to secure the same number of houses.
- 1.3 Staffing resources, needed to carry out the re-settlement work, will be funded by the Home Office.

## 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Recruit a PO2 Principal Housing Advisor and three C3 Housing Officers to deliver the resettlement programme, at a cost of £125,703 per annum, with the funding to be sourced from the Home Office.
- 2.2 Backfill posts, released by the officers to work on the Syrian re-settlement programme, from existing staffing resources.

## **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 Recruit a PO2 Principal Housing Advisor and three C3 Housing Officers to deliver the resettlement programme, at a cost of £125,703 per annum, with the funding to be sourced from the Home Office.
- 1.2 Backfill posts, released by the officers to work on the Syrian re-settlement programme, from existing staffing resources.

## **2.0 Background Information**

- 2.1 The United Nations has estimated that approximately 9.3m people are in need of humanitarian aid as a consequence of the conflict in Syria with approximately 2.7m people having fled to neighbouring countries.
- 2.2 The government made a commitment in January 2014 to relocate 500 Syrian people, displaced to neighbouring countries, in the UK: Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme. The government asked local authorities to assist in the scheme and Leeds took 6 Syrian households (using 4 council houses/1 housing association tenancy and 1 private rented property) in October 2015. In addition, the Council housed 9 Afghan households, under the Afghan Locally Engaged Staff Relocation Scheme, between July and October 2015. 8 council houses and 1 housing association property were used to accommodate the Afghan households. The re-housing work was led by officers from Housing Support in conjunction with officers from Migration Yorkshire.
- 3.3 The government has made a further commitment to take a further 20,000 Syrian people by 2020. Leeds has agreed to take a further 200 people over the next two years and to review further action thereafter. It is assumed that the 200 people will comprise approximately 50 households with the same number of properties required.
- 3.4 It is believed that the 200 people will be given leave to remain in the UK for an initial five year period.

## **3.0 Main Issues**

- 3.1 The experience of re-housing the first group of Syrian and Afghan households suggests that the programme of re-housing/re-settling the 200 people will be intensive in relation to identifying properties, furnishing and decoration, organising utility connections, arranging move-in and providing on-going support.
- 3.2 It is anticipated that a significant number of the 200 people will have some level of disability and require adapted housing. The level of information, supplied by the Home Office, on a person's needs has been limited and this makes it more challenging to find appropriate long-term housing to be accessed on arrival. It may well be that further assessment and re-housing work will be required after they have moved to the first housing offer.

- 3.2 The expectation is that a variety of different housing options will be secured including council housing, housing association properties and private rented tenancies. It is assumed that around 10 council houses will be used.
- 3.3 The first group of people to be re-settled in the UK are due to arrive in the UK on 9 December 2015. Household details have not yet been supplied by the Home Office but it is anticipated that there will be 6-8 households arriving.
- 3.4 It has been agreed, in principle, that Connect Housing will supply the first pool of properties through vacant units that are part of the Re-Connect (supported housing service for homeless families) contract that are unlikely to be used in the foreseeable future. The occupants will be offered five year fixed term tenancies with Connect Housing. It may well be that more vacant units at Re-Connect can be used for the subsequent groups of people.
- 3.5 Adaptation assessments will need to be carried out for any disabled people and the adaptation schemes installed.
- 3.6 The re-housing and re-settlement work will be led by Leeds Housing Options, complemented by the Health and Housing service, which will liaise with the housing provider service as required.
- 3.7 It is considered that the volume of work will require a PO2 Principal Housing Advisor post (cost £36,771 per annum) and 3 \* C3 Housing Officer posts (cost £88,932 per annum). Existing Job Descriptions will be reviewed and amended as needed. The cost of posts will be covered through Home Office funding.
- 3.8 **Workforce Implementation:** Due to the proposed changes to the terms and conditions of employment, which were unanimously agreed by the Council's General Purpose Committee on 29 July 2014, the implementation of restructure and assimilation process will be in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures in place at the time implementation commences.
- 3.9 **Recruitment:** it is proposed that the posts will be internally advertised and the post holders recruited through a competitive interview process. The recruited staff will be seconded from their substantive posts for a period of two years.
- 3.10 **Backfill of Posts:** It is proposed that the substantive posts of the successful candidates will be backfilled for a two year period. It is assumed that the budget is in place for this proposal.

## **5.0 Corporate Considerations**

### **5.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 5.1.1 Due to the proposed changes to the terms and conditions of employment, which were unanimously agreed by the Council's General Purpose Committee on 29 July 2014, the implementation of restructure and assimilation process will be in accordance with the Council's policies and procedures in place at the time implementation commences.

## **5.2 Equality Diversity Cohesion and Integration**

- 5.2.1 The issues of migration, asylum and migration have clear equality and cohesion issues and these will be carefully considered as part of the re-housing and re-settlement programme.

## **5.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

- 5.3.1 Leeds is a welcoming and compassionate city and the proposals reflect these values.

## **5.4 Resources and Value for Money**

- 5.4.1 The housing costs of the programme will either be met through government funding (staffing costs) or through existing programmes: such as adaptation budgets.

## **5.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 5.5.1 There are no specific legal implications from the proposal.
- 5.5.2 The proposal is not subject to call in.

## **5.6 Risk Management**

- 5.6.1 No risk issues have been identified.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

- 6.1 The staffing proposal will enable the Council to make the right re-housing and re-settlement package to the 200 Syrian people who will be re-settled in Leeds.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 Recruit a PO2 Principal Housing Advisor and three C3 Housing Officers to deliver the resettlement programme, at a cost of £125,703 per annum, with the funding to be sourced from the Home Office.
- 7.2 Backfill posts, released by the officers to work on the Syrian re-settlement programme, from existing staffing resources.

## **8.0 Background**

- 8.1 None

The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.