

## **SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOODS)**

### **INQUIRY INTO ASYLUM SEEKER CASE RESOLUTION**

#### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

##### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 At its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2008, Scrutiny Board (Environment and Neighbourhoods) resolved to undertake an Inquiry into the impact of the UK Border Agency Case Resolution Programme for asylum seekers who had submitted an asylum application prior to April 2007 and whose cases remained unresolved, upon the housing stock in the city.
- 1.2 Although the number of asylum applications nationally has decreased considerably over the last few years, the regional contract continues to accommodate approximately 20% of all supported asylum and failed asylum seekers. Historically, Leeds has had the largest proportion of asylum seeker placements in the region. Discussions have taken place with UKBA and other contracting local authorities to introduce measures that will even dispersal proportions out across the region. Measures have been agreed and are being implemented which are producing a thinning out of asylum procurement, across sector, in areas of high concentration.
- 1.3 Members were also interested in the related issue of community cohesion and how the authority was involved in the settlement of those asylum seekers who have been given permission to remain in the city following the case resolution drive from the Government.
- 1.4 UKBA is committed to removing the back log of cases that are now the business of the Case Resolution Directorate, and aims to have all pre-New Asylum Model (NAM) cases resolved by 2011. The initial phase undertaken between the end of August 2007 and March 2008 focussed upon families. UKBA maintain that the process will now progress on a case by case basis, prioritised by a number of criteria which take into account cost to the public purse and the ease at which a case can be resolved. Given the continuing process Members wish to discuss how the authority is preparing in terms of service provision, particularly in the long term.

##### **2.0 Scope of the inquiry**

- 2.1 The purpose of the Inquiry is to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:
  - Assess the impact of positively resolved cases upon housing provision by the authority and the private rented sector;

- Assess the impact of the case resolution process upon homelessness figures;
- Consider the details of the Government's case resolution policy and process in a Leeds and wider regional context;
- Assess the possible service requirements as the case resolution process develops;
- Consider the impact of case resolution on the placement of asylum seekers across the city and explore links with existing community cohesion policies.

### **3.0 Comments of the relevant Director and Executive Member**

- 3.1 In line with Scrutiny Board Procedure Rule 12.4 the views of the relevant Director and Executive Member have been sought and have been incorporated where appropriate into these Terms of Reference. Full details are available on request to the Scrutiny Support Unit.

### **4.0 Timetable for the inquiry**

- 4.1 The Inquiry will take place over a number of sessions. These sessions will involve working group meetings which will provide flexibility for the Board to gather and consider evidence that will aid the discussions during the public Board meetings.
- 4.2 The length of the Inquiry is subject to change.

### **5.0 Submission of evidence**

#### **5.1 Session one – Scrutiny Board Meeting (10<sup>th</sup> November 2008)**

To consider evidence in relation to the following areas:

- Details of the Government's case resolution policy and process in a Leeds and wider regional context;
- Baseline data on the number of asylum seekers within Leeds who qualify for the case resolution programme;
- Data showing the number of positively resolved cases as per the case resolution process;
- Current and potential impact upon housing provision by the authority and the private rented sector of resolved case resolution cases;
- Current and potential impact upon homelessness figures of resolved case resolution case.

**5.2 Session two – Scrutiny Board Meeting (12<sup>th</sup> January 2009)**

To consider evidence in relation to the following areas:

- An assessment of the possible service requirements as the case resolution process develops;
- Assessment of the impact of case resolution on the placement of asylum seekers across the city and links with existing community cohesion policies;
- Assessment of any identified equality impacts.

**5.3 Session three - (20<sup>th</sup> April 2009)**

- To agree final report

**6.0 Witnesses**

6.1 The following witnesses have been identified as possible contributors to the Inquiry:

- Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, Leeds City Council
- Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing
- Head of Housing Needs and Options, Leeds City Council
- Asylum Services Manager, Leeds City Council
- Chief Regeneration Officer, Leeds City Council
- Manager Homeless Services, Leeds City Council
- Representative from UK Border Agency
- Representative from the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Migration Partnership

**7.0 Post inquiry report monitoring arrangements**

7.1 Following the completion of the Scrutiny inquiry and the publication of the final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored.

7.2 The final inquiry report will include information on the detailed arrangements for how the implementation of recommendations will be monitored.

**8.0 Measures of success**

8.1 It is important to consider how the Scrutiny Board will deem if their inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious at the initial stages of an inquiry and can be included in these terms of reference. Other

measures of success may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.

8.2 Some initial measures of success are:

- No increase in the number of destitute refugees identified through the rough sleepers team
- Sustainable housing solutions identified for those whose cases have been resolved without increasing the volumes within temporary accommodation.
- Adequate support services in place to ensure individuals are able to fully access all move on services and integrate.