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Leeds Response to the Ukrainian Crisis

Date: 20 April 2022

Report of: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

This report provides Executive Board members with an overview and update on the current situation with the Ukrainian crisis, work undertaken to date and the implications for the council. There has been an impressive #TeamLeeds response from all colleagues and partners so far and the report also provides details of the Leeds Bradford Airport welcome hub arrangements linked to a national ask concerning support and signposting at main transport hubs, as well as details of the local welcome, engagement and council/partner service support connections in the city.

Leeds is a compassionate and welcoming city, and we are working at pace to welcome those who are escaping the current situation in Ukraine, integrate them into our communities whilst also striving to provide services that meet their needs. This includes:

- Working collaboratively with partners, services and communities who are playing a key role in responding to this challenge and will continue to do so in a #TeamLeeds approach, with the council playing a key role leading and coordinating the response.
- Liaising with colleagues in the broader geography, particularly about the establishment of a welcome hub at Leeds Bradford Airport, and with colleagues working at the national level in the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Home Office to help shape policy and guidance.
- The launch of the Leeds Together for Ukraine Funding Appeal, established to support the needs of Ukrainian refugees as they arrive in the city, by working with refugee charities and third sector organisations.
- Working through national guidance for the Homes for Ukraine scheme to ensure that sponsors are matched with those seeking refuge as quickly as possible and responding to offers of support from businesses and organisations.
- Establishing a combined and coordinated response set up at the Reginald Centre and the Ukrainian Centre for those refugees who need assistance on arrival to the city and to support settlement and integration.

- Regular dialogue and engagement with the Leeds branch of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain to help prepare for new arrivals to the city, and to better understand their needs and concerns.
- Preparing the city as well as we can with the information and resources, given the dynamically changing scenario and guidance we have available, and will continue to be proactive and proportionate in our approach.
- Responding to a range of new and unique scenarios to manage with this response given it is unprecedented in recent times and we will work through these commensurate with our ambition and values, particularly in relation to compassion and Leeds being a welcoming city.
- Supporting people who are new to Leeds and ensuring that their interests and contributions are included in all aspects of city life.
- Our approach also supports collaborative partnerships across services identifying and addressing the key issues that can create inequalities and tensions between our migrant population and the rest of the population of Leeds.

The work outlined contributes to Leeds City Council's migration programme and under the strategic, coordinated, and inclusive approach to migration helps the city to achieve its ambition of being a welcoming and compassionate city. It underpins the work highlighted in the Best City Ambition to tackle poverty and inequality in Leeds and improve quality of life for everyone, with the city's focus on Health and Wellbeing, Inclusive Growth and Zero Carbon as key drivers. Supporting those joining us in Leeds is a key aspect of our shared ambition to a safe and welcoming city for all, where people are connected to their communities and enabled to thrive.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- a) note the contents of this update report and endorse the approach adopted within our strategic, coordinated and inclusive approach to migration for Leeds.
- b) note the responsibility of the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment for leading a collaborative strategic city-wide response.
- c) note the responsibility of the Chief Officer for Safer, Stronger Communities in leading the cross-council approach to provide strategic and operational direction for the city.
- d) Support the continued and evolving partnership response to the Ukrainian crisis as further guidance and policy development is received from government.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

1. Russia began an invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 in a major escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict that began in 2014. This has been condemned internationally and is considered a war of aggression and the invasion is the largest military assault on a country boarding countries in NATO and the European Union since World War II.
2. The UK and their international partners are united in support for Ukraine. The UK government is providing a range of economic, humanitarian and defensive military assistance to Ukraine, and is imposing additional sanctions on Russia and Belarus.

3. On 24th February Leeds City Council published a statement on the Russian invasion of Ukraine:

'Leeds City Council and the city of Leeds are deeply saddened and shocked by the situation in Ukraine. Our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine and with those Ukrainians who already call Leeds their home.'

The deliberate targeting of innocent people is beyond comprehension and as a council and a city we condemn this. Leeds is a welcoming and compassionate city and we will work with our Ukrainian friends and partners in communities across the city to provide the necessary support and reassurance that may be needed."

Leeds is determined to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Ukraine in their hour of need, just as it has with refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and many other parts of the world in recent years.

Leeds has a long and proud history of helping those in need and, as a council, we are working closely with the Leeds Branch of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain to extend our hand of friendship once again.'

4. On Friday 4th March members of the Leeds Branch of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain were invited by the leader of Leeds City Council to meet senior officers and elected members at the Civic Hall, Leeds. A discussion took place which centred around how the council could best support people arriving in the city and work with the Leeds based residential community with existing links to Ukraine. The Executive members and Council Officers who attended that meeting were:

- Councillor James Lewis, Leader of the Council
- Councillor Harland – Executive Member for Communities
- Councillor Jane Dowson - Chapel Allerton Ward
- Tom Riordan - Chief Executive
- James Rogers – Director Communities, Housing and Environment
- Neil Evans – Director of Resources
- Martin Farrington – Director City Development
- Paul Money – Chief Officer Safer, Stronger Communities Team
- Geoff Turnbull, Senior Policy and Performance Officer visited the Ukrainian Centre,

5. The Leeds branch of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain is situated in Chapeltown. It was founded by the community and operate principally from a community centre which was funded by donations from the community who arrived in Leeds after the second world war when many Ukrainians fled the returning Soviet forces. The community is well integrated and have been joined by people arriving in the city more recently having accessed other legal migration routes to now reside and work in the city. The community have a long-established relationship with Cllr Jane Dowson who is one of the local Chapel Allerton ward members.
6. Dialogue with the Ukrainian community to date has been extensive aiming to understand their concerns and needs and services are working with them to provide the support they need in the short, medium and long term. This work is taking place to establish local pathways of support for employment, housing, education, welfare support, translation and interpretation and social care amongst other areas.

7. Current Situation

8. The Government's response to the Ukraine crisis is being developed at a rapid pace and the national offer includes two main schemes.
9. The Ukraine Family Scheme allows family members of British nationals, UK settled persons and certain others to come to or stay in the UK. This scheme went live on 4th March 2022. It is free to apply to the Ukraine Family Scheme. Individuals do not need to pay the immigration health surcharge or biometric enrolment fee for this scheme and other visa requirements have been relaxed. Under this scheme people can stay in the UK for up to 3 years and people are entitled to live, work and study in the UK and access public funds.
10. The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched on 14 March 2022 by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Guidance for council's was issued on 18th March 2022. This scheme is open to Ukrainian nationals who were residents in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022 and also to their immediate family members (for example spouse/partner and children under 18) who may be of other nationalities, to be sponsored to come to the UK. Applicants can apply from Ukraine or from any other third country.
11. The number of people who can access this scheme is uncapped and is dependent on the capacity of the sponsors who come forward. Currently, there are 228 Ukrainians that have requested Leeds as their preferred destination, and 156 potential sponsors have indicated that they are willing to accommodate Ukrainian refugees. These figures can change on a daily basis.
12. According to the latest ONS data, there are 1,260 people in Yorkshire and Humber that were born in Ukraine, only 3% of the national total. The largest population is in Leeds (300 – ranks 33 out of 331 England and Wales local authorities).
13. Guests will be able to live and work in the UK for up to three years and access benefits, healthcare, employment, and other support. Those arriving need to be subject of standard security checks as condition of being issued with a visa. Sponsors and all adults in sponsors' households will also be subject to initial Police National Computer (PNC) criminal records and Warnings Index checks by the Home Office. Councils will be required to undertake basic DBS checks for all adults in the sponsor household; and in cases where the incoming arrivals include children and/or vulnerable adults, an enhanced DBS with barred lists check will be required promptly relating to all adults in the sponsor household.
14. Sponsors in the UK can be of any nationality, with any immigration status, provided they have at least six months' leave to remain within the UK and pass the background checks. They can live in any part of the UK. Sponsors are asked to provide accommodation for a minimum of six months. Sponsors can also receive an optional 'thank you' payment of £350 per month for up to the first 12 months of sponsorship. This payment is limited to one monthly payment per residential address, regardless of the number of individuals sponsored. Payments will stop when the sponsorship ends.
15. Sponsors should not charge rent. They will not be expected to cover the costs of food and living expenses, although they may wish to offer this, especially in early weeks while guests are settling into the UK.
16. The scheme will be rolled out in phases. Initially, individual members of the public can sponsor a guest from Ukraine who meets the eligibility criteria for this scheme. In later phases organisations and community groups will be able to sponsor multiple guests.

17. On Friday 18 March, a Home Office scheme opened for visa applications. Sponsors at this stage must be linked to specific named individuals.

18. Sponsors and guests will find each other and match themselves externally. There is no single route to matching, and both the sponsor and guest could use a number of channels to find a match. They could for example already have a relationship in place with a friend in the UK/Ukraine, they could be friends of friends, or could find a sponsor or guest through an NGO, charity, or other channel.

19. The charity organisation Reset supports and leads the Community Sponsorship arrangements in the UK. They are currently accepting applications from potential sponsors and from refugees hoping to come to the UK and are processing applications, making matches, and providing training and support under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. Further information can be found at [Homes for Ukraine](#).

20. In terms of funding, there will be a payment of £10,500 per Ukrainian person to the council in year one (funding for year's two and three has not yet been confirmed). This funding will not be ringfenced, however, several conditions will be attached, with Leeds City Council expected to:

- Carry out accommodation checks prior to the arrival of a guest and use our discretion in determining the appropriate approach to undertaking these checks.
- Carry out DBS checks on all adults currently in the sponsor household and enhanced DBS checks where they are required.
- Manage the payment of £350 per month to sponsor households. This will be one 'thank you' payment of £350 per month, regardless of how many people are welcomed into the household. This payment cannot be made until property and DBS checks have been carried out.
- Provide interim cash payments to arrivals of £200 per person, these payments would need to be made as soon as possible after arrival.
- Provide school places for children of school age.
- Access to job seeking services.
- In instances of relationship break down, council homelessness process will apply.
- Work to support the integration of Ukrainian families into the local area.

21. Additional funding for education will be available as follows:

- Early years (ages 2-4) £3,000 per child
- Primary (ages 5-11) £6,580 per child
- Secondary (ages 11-18) £8,755 per child

22. This includes support for children with disabilities and special educational needs. There is a recognition that there may be additional essential costs, and this will be managed on a case by case basis.

23. Currently there is no indication of any additional funding that will be made available for health services/support. Should this remain to be the case, it will cause additional pressures on the health service who are still working at capacity to deal with the pandemic and residual issues.

24. Welcome Points

25. The Government is asking Local Authorities to establish 'Welcome Points' at likely ports of entry into the UK to provide arrivals from Ukraine with a warm welcome and any immediate humanitarian support they may require before onward travel to their arranged accommodation. These are intended to provide a contact point for both general information

and orientation and, in a minority of cases, emergency accommodation or travel assistance should this be necessary.

26. The council has been asked to stand up a Welcome Point at Leeds Bradford Airport (LBA), which we are progressing with West Yorkshire partners through the Local Resilience Forum. Whilst there are still uncertainties regarding the number of arrivals, the levels of support required are likely to vary and will be determined by personal experiences ahead of and on leaving Ukraine, with the expectation that traumatic experiences will require trauma informed services where required. It is expected that arrivals will be predominantly women and children due the mandate upon males to stay in Ukraine.

27. Government funding has been secured and determined using available transit data and current understanding of the relative volumes of Ukrainians arriving via particular entry routes. It is estimated this funding will enable the council to sustain the Welcome Point arrangements at LBA for a period of at least two months.

28. Leeds City Council will be able to spend this grant on any Welcome Point provision we see fit and according to the needs at LBA, but it is expected that it will be used to cover the costs of:

- Initial welcome for arrivals and sign posting to further support venues
- Rest point for families and individuals
- Translation service
- Basic health needs assessment
- Support for onward travel to other areas of the region/country

29. Leeds City Council will establish a secondary reception centre for those arrivals who will be moving into Leeds. This would be at the Reginald Centre where more in depth support and access to services will be provided. This would be supplemented by additional community support that would be offered at the Leeds Ukrainian Community Centre building, opposite the Reginald Centre, enabling the established Ukrainian community to offer further holistic, cultural and practical support to new arrivals.

30. The emerging model of how the Reginald Centre and the Ukrainian community centre will work together to provide complementary service provision has been met with approval from all parties involved, with the Ukrainian Centre focusing on social support, signposting and hosting a pop up 'shop' of free items for new arrivals with the Reginald Centre focusing on the delivery of all key council service provision.

31. A guide for service provision from the Reginald Centre is being produced for the Ukrainian Centre to gain a comprehensive understanding of what services are provided including those from health, Children's Services and other partners. A 'Welcome Pack' is also under development that will provide guidance on life in Leeds for new arrivals and build on previous versions of this document that have been produced for migrant communities.

32. Leeds Together for Ukraine Funding Appeal

33. On 8th March 2022 Leeds City Council announced details of a major fundraising appeal to help those facing upheaval and heartbreak following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The council kickstarted the fundraising with a donation of £50,000. The current fundraising total stands at just under £100,000 and we expect this to further increase.

34. The money raised will be used to provide accommodation support and other forms of assistance – in partnership with a range of refugee charities and other third sector

organisations – to Ukrainian refugees as they build new lives in Leeds after fleeing the fighting in their homeland. It will also be used to further develop local support systems to ensure Leeds remains a welcoming and compassionate city for all migrants in the long term.

35. Initiated by the council with the aim of creating a focal point for people across the city keen to do their bit to help the displaced and the desperate, the appeal is being administered by Leeds Community Foundation. It is anticipated there will be two initial funding rounds. A closed round will target funding to existing refugee organisations who have the systems and background to provide urgent support followed by a second open round where any organisation will be able to bid for grants to provide medium and longer-term support based on emerging needs.
36. The Safer Stronger Communities Team continues to work with a range of businesses and other partners to secure further donations to the fund. It is anticipated that larger donations will continue to be made throughout the coming months arising from fundraising events planned across the city by a range of groups and organisations.

37. Support Arrangements

38. The Safer Stronger Communities Team will take the leadership role on the development of the Leeds response and will also provide operational support to co-ordinate activities and services.
39. A strategic cross council/partner steering group has been established to co-ordinate the local response to administer, and support arrivals from Ukraine, under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and Family Visa scheme. The group is chaired by Paul Money, Chief Officer Safer and Stronger Communities, with good representation from all service areas and increasingly partners.
40. Several workstreams are emerging to be able to deliver a coordinated and comprehensive response, including financial support, education, social care and safeguarding, some health provision e.g. potential vaccination, housing, access to employment, fundraising and allocation of grants through Leeds Community Foundation, engagement with the Ukrainian community, business engagement, community cohesion, communications, risk management, and council implications e.g. finance and digital.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected:
Have ward members been consulted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

41. There is an urgent need to respond to the Ukrainian crisis due to the ongoing conflict and impact on civilians escaping the invasion of their country. There is a moral obligation upon the city to respond to the crisis and to ensure that partners across the city work collaboratively to ensure that we are able to welcome refugees from Ukraine as quickly as possible.
42. The Homes for Ukraine scheme will have an impact on services and partners across the council and city. We are already experiencing a number of additional responsibilities that are having to be picked up as part of existing duties and roles across a number of services.

43. The council and its partners are having to respond at pace to facilitate the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the safe passage of Ukrainian refugees to the city. This is taking place against a backdrop of limited, and still to be developed, national guidance.
44. As the city begins to welcome individuals from Ukraine, we will start to better understand their needs and challenges in terms of settling into Leeds. This will require an immediate and dynamic response from a range of statutory partners.
45. Whilst the government has committed to providing a tariff for every new arrival from Ukraine, the council and its partners are already involved in much preparatory work that is taking place without any additional resource and this is adding to current workload pressures as the pandemic continues to have an impact on staffing resources.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

46. A citywide strategic group, including council and partner agencies, is the key vehicle for consultation and engagement and meets weekly to ensure a coordinated and rapid response to implementing the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The group builds upon the processes that already exist across the council and with partners, aiming to embed best practice and maximise the benefits of engagement across the partnership.
47. Given the high profile and impact of the Ukrainian crisis, there are a number of partnerships and strategic groups that have been established locally and regionally to develop systems and processes to implement the Homes for Ukraine scheme.
48. Alongside these, the council has been engaging with Migration Yorkshire on important issues related to safeguarding, housing, integration and community support. The Homes for Ukraine team in Leeds are also working closely with local authorities in the region to share good practice.
49. The Reginald Community hub is being developed as a key welcome point following consultation with the Ukrainian Association in Leeds. Through the continued discussions and engagement between both parties, a holistic approach to supporting the integration of new arrivals from Ukraine is being developed.

What are the resource implications?

50. The Ukrainian schemes require a significant amount of resource to respond as a compassionate city, to the national policy and local requests and challenges. There is considerable pressure on the provision of accommodation for the Ukraine Family Scheme. This scheme does not come with any government funding.
51. As family members seek to rescue their loved ones from Ukraine through the Family Scheme, there is a risk that upon arrival they will present themselves as homeless where there is insufficient space at a family home. This will present additional challenges and pressures.
52. The government is providing a fixed tariff of £10,500 per individual that arrives in the city through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. This tariff is expected to cover the range of checks, activities and support required as detailed in this report.
53. A one-off ringfenced grant of £70,000 from government will allow for the establishment of a Welcome Point at Leeds Bradford Airport for a period of 2 months. This will provide an initial

welcome and support service to arrivals from Ukraine before they are transported to their destination points in the city or region.

What are the legal implications?

54. There are legal implications arising from national changes under the Ukraine Family Scheme, the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and the Ukraine Extension Scheme. We have responded to national changes over the past few years including the UK's future points-based immigration system following the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020 which ended freedom of movement, the new bespoke visa route for Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas), the New Plan for Immigration and Afghan Resettlement.
55. A citywide strategic group, chaired by the Chief Officer for Safer Stronger Communities, provides oversight for the programmes of work that are required to facilitate new arrivals from Ukraine. The views and aspirations of local ward members will be instrumental in developing the citywide response.
56. There are no exempt parts of this report so there is no access to information issues.
57. This report is eligible for call-in.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

58. Having a coherent and strategic approach to migration supports the council to deliver its priorities and minimises any associated risks.
59. As the UK government continues to make changes around immigration policy, it is important we have routes into our newer communities, to ensure they are able to settle in Leeds and access services and communities. The work we undertake cross council, with statutory partners and with the third sector ensures we can meet the needs of new communities and address gaps and challenges.
60. Failure to fully engage and enlist the support of a wide range of partners and council services to welcome new arrivals into the city will hinder the council's efforts to deliver against the Ukrainian schemes. It is crucial that we maintain and build on the #TeamLeeds approach, maintain momentum, and work at pace to provide the immediate and long-term support required to those escaping the conflict.
61. Whilst the government guidance under the Ukraine Family Scheme allows immediate and extended families to be invited to live with family, there are a number of strategic and operational risks. These include risks related to health and well-being, community cohesion, organisational impact, and resource and capacity issues that have been captured within the corporate risk register.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

62. Our strategic, coordinated and inclusive approach to the Ukrainian crisis, and migration more generally, in Leeds is rooted in our Best City Ambition which is clear Leeds aims to be a global city playing its part, and a safe and welcoming place for everyone where people irrespective of their background are able to thrive socially and economically. This approach aims to ensure

people who migrate to Leeds are able to establish their lives quickly and successfully.

63. Our Team Leeds approach is crucial to achieving the above, with all stakeholders working in partnership to welcome and support refugees arriving in the city. The importance of this programme providing a good start for Ukrainians in Leeds is implicit in the three pillars of the Ambition.

64. The strategic approach to migration contributes to key elements of the Inclusive Growth Strategy, which focus on allowing of individuals and their families to prosper. Examples include:

- Best city for health and wellbeing: working in partnership with Public Health on the vaccine inequalities plan and engagement with diverse and vulnerable communities.
- Putting employers and people at the centre of the education and skills system: partnership approach to developing an ESOL Strategy for the city
- Working together to create better jobs, tackling low pay and boosting productivity: collaborating with Localities and third sector on the NHS pilot into secure work
- Leeds as a digital city: working closely with 100% Digital Leeds to provide devices and connectivity to household without equipment and access to Wi-Fi.

65. The strategic approach to migration contributes to achieving the outcomes of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy as follows:

- People will live longer and have healthier lives
- People will live full, active and independent lives
- People's quality of life will be improved by access to quality services
- People will be actively involved in their health and their care
- People will live in healthy, safe and sustainable communities

There is an established structure to feed into the Health and Wellbeing Board via the Leeds Migrant Health Board, and the Leeds Migration Partnership has health as a strategic priority in the city and works with statutory partners to fulfil the shared action plan.

66. The council has been involved in developing awareness of the climate emergency in Leeds through project work and in partnership with Environmental services. However, the climate emergency has potentially a greater impact on the migration agenda in Leeds in terms of the changes to migration flows caused by forced migration due to either weather-related hazards and associated impact on livelihoods leading to families becoming displaced, or the emergence of conflict in relation to scarce resources and food insecurity. Whilst the 1951 Refugee Convention does not make provisions for people displaced by climate change, the idea of a 'climate refugee' is gaining some ground. UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) describes climate change as a 'risk multiplier' or 'threat multiplier' for other drivers of displacement (*Climate change is the defining crisis of our time and it particularly impacts the displaced.*)

67. The office of the UNHCR, November 2020 have also highlighted that 'when people are forced to move by climate change and conflict, it is very rare for them to return due to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation rendering areas of return too dangerous to live in or too fragile to support large populations, many people have nowhere viable to go back to. It changes how UNHCR has to look at and approach durable solutions in the future'. This reality has obvious implications for migrants who have made their home in Leeds who may need to secure their immigration status to remain in the country. The council will continue to work with academic partners, the third sector and special interest organisations to stay abreast

of socio-political factors giving rise to displacement and the impact on migration to seek sanctuary or economic stability.

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

68. None. As a compassionate and welcoming city there is a moral obligation to aid and support to those arriving in the city.

b) How will success be measured?

69. A number of metrics will be developed to measure our success in welcoming and integrating new arrivals from Ukraine. These will include, but not limited to:

- Number of refugees arriving in Leeds.
- Number of refugees successfully supported/accommodated in Leeds (could be further split into adults and children/unaccompanied children).
- Number of sponsors in the city.
- Number / percentage of refugees with a health assessment.
- Number of refugee children supported into schools.
- Number of refugees supported into jobs and/or volunteering roles.

70. Further exploration is required to assess whether there are arrangements in place to capture this information

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

71. Immediate, and ongoing, to reflect the continued response efforts against the background of the conflict in Ukraine.

Appendices

None

Background papers

None