

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Payment of rent top up for resettled refugees
Date of decision:	28 th January 2019
Decision maker:	Director of adults and communities
Authority for delegated decision:	Under the executive decision 'Strategic approach to refugees and asylum seekers in Herefordshire' made by Cabinet on the 14/12/2017 the Director was authorised, following consultation with the director for children's wellbeing and the relevant cabinet members, to take all operational decisions necessary to extend the resettlement of refugees families, from the existing pledge of 60 to a maximum of 95 individuals. http://hc-modgov:9070/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=4927
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Refugee Action and Spring Housing Association have been consulted as the main point of contact with refugee families. They have voiced the thoughts of the refugee families in respect of this matter and been able to share experience from other areas providing refugee resettlement. Other Local Authorities in the West Midlands area have also been consulted through the network facilitated by the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership. This consultation has informed directly the proposed approach to and duration of continued funding to meet part of rental costs.
Decision made:	To pay the full rent top up during years two and three of resettlement and 50% of the rent top during the fourth year of resettlement.
Reasons for decision:	<p>Herefordshire Council has committed to supporting the resettlement of refugees through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and Vulnerable Childrens Resettlement Scheme. Funding is providing By the Home Office for 5 years to support this scheme, reducing year on year.</p> <p>Providing safe and secure housing is one of the requirements of the funding instruction. Refugees face additional barriers to accessing employment, particularly of a comparable level to their work prior to their displacement, due to the language barrier and their resettlement journeys and experiences.</p> <p>To support resettled refugees in their resettlement journey the payment of any shortfall in rent is required in full for the first three years, reducing to 50% in the fourth year and then being removed in full for the fifth and final year of resettlement. This will provide security in their housing, with an incremental withdrawal of this during the period when there is funding to provide additional support with budgeting and other adjustments to paying their full housing costs.</p> <p>Continuing to provide assistance with shortfalls in rent is consistent with other local authorities approach to refugee resettlement.</p>

<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>Finance Funding for refugee resettlement is received from the Home Office, this is used to fund the rent tops from year 2 of resettlement.</p> <p>There are 95 people (+ 5 babies for whom there is no funding) currently resettled in Herefordshire on refugee resettlement programmes, living in a total of 23 properties. There is an average of just over 4 people per household. A total of £20,500 per person funding from the Home Office is provided for the 5 year scheme. This allows for an average of £85k per household over the period of resettlement. The average rent top up for the properties is £25/week (£1.3k/year). (Some properties have no top up, others are currently up to £72/week.) If the full top up is paid in years 2 and 3, and 50% top up in year 4 this equates to a total average of £3,250 per household across the resettlement scheme, less than 4% of the total funding available for the household.</p> <p>Equality The provision of rent top ups provides resettled refugees with additional support as they continue their resettlement and integration in Herefordshire, particularly whilst they develop their English language and other skills to enable them to access employment.</p> <p>Legal The council is required to provide support to resettled refugees as stipulated in the Home Office Funding Instruction.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>The alternative option would be not to continue to provide a rent top. This option is not recommended as additional financial pressures on families would leave them vulnerable to homelessness which would then place additional demands on limited social housing resources in Hereford City. This would also not align with the requirement of the Home Office Funding Instruction for the Local Authority to provide resettlement support.</p> <p>The other alternative would be to continue paying a full top up to the end of the funded programme. This option is not recommended as this would require families to adjust subsequently to paying a top up of rent (where applicable) whilst there is no other support available to assist them with any budgeting or other issues that may arise.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>No officers or members involved or consulted in the decision-making have declared an interest.</p>

Signed..... Date: / /