

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Afghan Refugees Accommodation Furnishing and set up costs
Date of decision:	1 st December 2021
Decision maker:	Interim Director for Adults and Communities
Authority for delegated decision:	Cabinet decision in June 2020 delegating authority to Director of Adults and Communities to make all operational arrangements required to implement refugee resettlement. Also, the chief executive's scheme of delegation SA09; Commissioning, quality assurance and contract management relating to all ages
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	<p>The council has engaged with the home office, West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (WMSMP) and the local Armed Forces community in preparing for refugee resettlement. It has also engaged with NHS partners, the voluntary and community sector and housing providers in determining the commissioned support for refugees which is required.</p> <p>Discussion with the provider has been undertaken to ensure capacity and structure is in place to deliver the services required.</p> <p>Legal, finance and procurement colleagues have been consulted and advice provided has been incorporated into the decision.</p>
Decision made:	<p>To enter into a contract with Spring Housing by way of direct award, to provide furniture and a property set up of accommodation for Afghan Refugees, including redecoration and carpeting, where required. This will ensure properties are appropriately decorated, furnished and set up to an acceptable standard, prior to families arriving under the refugee resettlement scheme.</p> <p>The value of the contract is up to a maximum of £180,000 to furnish and set-up houses or flats to accommodate up to 85 refugees. The items to be purchased will be supplied and fitted during a period of 8 months starting from 1 December 2021.</p>
Reasons for decision:	<p>The council has undertaken to resettle 85 Afghan refugees from December 2021 to June 2022 under the ARAP and ACRS schemes. The Council has made a commitment to the Home Office and Armed Forces partners to support arrivals of around 53 refugees in 12 families during December 2021 and January 2022. The accommodation for the refugee families has been made available by two registered housing providers and the Diocese of Hereford. The landlords will supply unfurnished and generally without floor coverings.</p> <p>The council has entered into a contract with Refugee Action to support refugee families and Spring Housing is its sub-contractor, providing tenancy support and housing management and preparing and equipping families' accommodation. However, the costs of furniture, floor coverings and general fitting out of the housing are not included in the contract. Spring Housing recommends purchasing new items for refugee's</p>

	<p>accommodation, for durability and pursuit of best practice.</p> <p>Contracting with Spring Housing is the best and most appropriate option because;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The arrangements must be implemented immediately to support December 2021 arrivals of refugees and the council have only recently been told that these arrangements have not been included in the contract between Refugee Action and Spring Housing. Therefore there is not sufficient time to undertake a procurement process. • Spring Housing has niche expertise in setting up and equipping accommodation for refugees and can deliver the products/services using their existing commercial relationships at competitive rates and in the tight timescales required • The costs of Spring Housing’s staffing and management time have already been provided for within the contract with Refugee Action and therefore using a different provider would result in these costs being repeated. • The costs of contracting with Spring Housing are for purchase of new items and any decorating only, along with negligible travel expenses. • There is therefore no commercial benefit to Spring Housing of the proposed supply contract as it will be delivered at cost with no overheads added. <p>It is proposed that under the terms of the contract, the items purchased would become the property of the council at the end of the refugee family’s occupation, but would be provided to refugee families for their use on an indefinite basis.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>There is no financial risk arising from this decision. All costs of providing this service will be met by funding provided by central government to resettle refugees. Under the ARAP and ACRS schemes this funding includes £20,500 per person which is paid to the local authority over three years.</p> <p>It is unlikely that any form of challenge would be received in relation to procurement regulations. Should challenge be made, the decision to make a direct award could be justified on the grounds that local authorities have needed to respond quickly to support the resettlement of refugees and there is no commercial benefit to Spring Housing of the proposed supply contract. It is proposed that under the terms of the contract, the items purchased would become the property of the council, but would be provided to refugee families for their use on an indefinite basis.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>To delay or cancel arrivals. This option is not recommended as Herefordshire will not be in a position to welcome families in the timeframes agreed with the Home Office. Delayed arrivals will cause significant disruption and loss of available accommodation, which would significantly damage relationships with housing providers and armed forces partners. There would also be potential reputational damage for the council with local residents, the Home Office, neighbouring and regional councils and local strategic partners, including Police and the NHS.</p> <p>To commission a service using a competitive procurement process. This option is not recommended as it would lead to significant delays to refugee arrivals, with a variety of consequences. The council has entered into a contract with Refugee Action to support refugee families and Spring Housing is its sub-contractor. The costs of Spring Housing’s staffing and management time have already been provided for within the contract with</p>

	<p>Refugee Action and therefore using a different provider would result in these costs being repeated.</p> <p>To use an alternative means of supply. This option is not recommended. Alternative means of supply have been identified but this would not provide a solution for the imminent December arrivals and would be more complicated to implement. It would require separate arrangement of different suppliers and transport and rely upon second hand and graded products, which is not best practice.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed..... Date: