

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Refugee Services Contracts
Date of decision:	22 nd July 2022
Decision maker:	Corporate Director for Community Well Being
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.
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	<p>The council has engaged with the Home Office, West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (WMSMP) and the local Armed Forces community regarding 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 current providers has also been undertaken to ensure capacity and structure is in place to deliver the services required.</p>
Decision made:	<p>To utilise the provision to extend the current Refugee Orientation and Support Services contract delivered by Refugee Action by 6 months; and to extend the Afghan Refugees Accommodation Furnishing and set up costs contract with Spring Housing by 6 months to provide a property set up function.</p> <p>The extension of the term of the Refugee Orientation and Support Services contract until 31st December 2023 (inclusive of 12 months of resettlement support for new arrivals for the period 1st July to 31 December 2022) will enable the council to meet its current commitment to resettle 85 refugees.</p> <p>The Council is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for those who have been displaced from their home. Funding is made available by the Home Office for refugee resettlement schemes to ensure that all accommodation is equipped, furnished and decorated appropriately for arriving families.</p>
Reasons for decision:	<p>Herefordshire is recognised for its commitment to migration programmes, in late 2020 a cabinet decision was taken to resettle at least 125 refugees by 2025. As part of this overall commitment a decision was made to resettle 85 refugees in the period December 2021 to June 2022.</p> <p>Since December 2021 a total of 59 Afghan refugees have been resettled in Herefordshire. Resettlement of a further 26 refugees is required to meet the commitment made by the council.</p> <p>Delays in resettlement activity have been seen across England, this is due to a number of factors predominately size of property required and refusals of offers of accommodation.</p>

	<p>Local authorities across England are now being asked to look for properties that can accommodate single people/couples and properties suitable for larger families (4 or more bedrooms) or properties in very close proximity to each other that could accommodate large extended multi-generational families. Properties of this size and nature have been very hard to secure locally impacting on our ability to arrange 85 arrivals by the original commitment deadline. Work with colleagues is ongoing to identify and secure further accommodation through our network of registered housing providers.</p> <p>Due to extensive work completed with MOD and strategic migration colleagues Herefordshire has seen limited instances of refusals of accommodation however when refusals do happen this creates delays to arrivals. Work has being undertaken by the Government to address the high level number of refusals being seen in the UK. This work has resulted in an enhanced matching process being implemented to build on work already begun to improve the rate at which families accept offers of accommodation, it is anticipated this new process will limit the number of refusals and reduce delays of people resettling locally.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>There is low 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 £20,520 per person which is paid to the local authority over three years.</p> <p>Commercial services and legal colleagues have confirmed the timeframe of the Spring Housing contract can be extended as long as the original contract value is not increased.</p> <p>There is sufficient remaining funds within the original resource allocation to cover the anticipated costs of furnishing and setting up the additional properties.</p> <p>The additional costs to cover the extension period for the Refugee Action contract are £130,863.52 bringing the overall contract value to £610,836.54. Commercial services and legal colleagues have confirmed it is permissible to make use of the 6 month extension period with the Refugee Action contract to include varying the current contract price by up to 50% of the existing contract value. The increased finding required is within this 50% range.</p>
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>Undertake a competitive tender process. This option was not recommended. A full procurement process will cause delays and previous procurements to secure a support and orientation service for refugees have shown there are limited providers of this specialist support available and due to the numbers of families requiring support their capacity will be affected by their commitments elsewhere in the UK.</p> <p>The council has commissioned specialist refugee support and orientation services twice before, in 2016 and 2018. In each case, the level of interest from the market was limited and only one specialist provider made a bid and was awarded the contracts on both occasions. This reflects the specialist nature of the service and the limited number of specialist charitable agencies operating nationally.</p> <p>To delay or cancel arrivals. This option is not recommended as Herefordshire will not be in a position to meet its commitment to the Home Office. 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>It is not recommended to undertake a competitive procurement process for the property set up function. Meeting the costs of furnishing and setting up</p>

	<p>would require the council to enter into a further contract or contracts for the purchase of furniture and the setting up of the accommodation. Extending the contract with Spring Housing is the best and most appropriate option because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The funding levels within the existing contract are sufficient to allow for additional properties to be furnished. • 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 timescales required. • Spring Housing offers flexible pricing, depending on the numbers in each family, property size and level of work required
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed..... Date: