

# Support for Ukraine

**Meeting: Cabinet**

**Meeting date: Thursday 27 October 2022**

**Report by: Cabinet member health and adult wellbeing;**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

Key

This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A threshold of £500,000 is regarded as significant.

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.

Notice has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

To seek approval for the spend plan which details how funding from the Government for the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme will be spent.

The Government is providing funding at a rate of £10,500 per person to councils to enable them to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities. This funding is paid to the council as a section 31 grant as set out in the Local Government Act 2003 and is un-ring-fenced.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched on 14 March 2022 by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The scheme allows individuals to sponsor named people from Ukraine. The number of people who can access this scheme is uncapped and is dependent on

the capacity of the sponsors who come forward. Guests will be able to live and work in the UK for up to 3 years and have access to benefits, healthcare, employment, and other support.

The government is providing additional, separate funding to councils to provide education services for children from families if they have arrived through the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- a) The planned support for Ukraine and associated spending as set out in the report and Appendix A is approved.**
- b) That authority is delegated to the Corporate Director for Community Wellbeing to take all operational and budgetary decisions in relation to their proposals and the implementation, including the use of contingency sums and budget variations within the overall approved budget.**

## **Alternative options**

1. Not to provide or commission a range of support for Ukrainian people, utilising the government funding available. This option is not recommended; participation in the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme is mandatory for all councils across England. Both the Homes for Ukraine grant funding and the related education funding come with grant determinations that state how they should be used. The spending plan outlined in this decision reflects government guidance and has been developed in consultation with council teams and wider stakeholders.
2. To develop and provide a different range of support services for Ukrainian people, with less emphasis on community and voluntary groups and the community grant scheme. This option is not recommended as the proposals have been the subject of general engagement and support within the council and with external stakeholders. The proposed approach will enable the council to make the best use of the funding available for the benefit of guests and sponsors, enabling them to resettle into Herefordshire and sustain the sponsorship arrangements for as long as possible.

## **Key considerations**

3. The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched by the UK government on 14 March 2022. Sponsors are expected to provide guests with accommodation for a minimum of six months and will receive a 'thank you' payment of £350 per month for up to 12 months.
4. The number of people who can access this scheme is uncapped and is dependent on the capacity of the sponsors who come forward. Those arriving need to meet standard security checks prior to being issued with a visa. There is no end date set for arrivals under the scheme.
5. Guests are able to live and work in the UK for up to 3 years and access benefits, healthcare, employment, and other support.
6. The Government issued guidance to councils explaining the role that they should play in the Homes for Ukraine Scheme including a number of safety and safeguarding checks as well as the provision of support to both the sponsor and Ukrainian guests. The guidance broadly sets out how the funding should be used including an initial payment of £200 per person from the Ukraine upon arrival.

7. Sponsors and guests have to apply to participate in the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme through a dedicated government online Foundry system. This information is shared with councils. As of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022, there were 678 unique guests on the system; of this number 499 have already arrived to 185 sponsors. Approximately 37% of all arrivals are children and young people under the age of 18. Based on current arrival numbers this means approximately 185 children and young people will need nursery, school and college places.
8. The government is providing funding at a rate of £10,500 per person to councils to enable them to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities. An initial payment of £200 from this sum is made to each guest, leaving a sum of £10,300 for the council to use to support the scheme.
9. This funding is un-ring fenced, with a number of conditions attached, and matches the tariff offered under the first year of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), although the role of councils is different. For example, councils have not been asked to source initial accommodation under this scheme as this is provided by the sponsor.
10. The Government have issued councils with guidance that indicates that the following activities are in scope:
  - a) Accommodation checks
  - b) Safeguarding checks including DBS checks for sponsors
  - c) Interim payments for guests – an initial cash payment of £200 on arrival
  - d) Bank Accounts – signposting and guidance
  - e) Education and Childcare
  - f) Service Referrals e.g. social care, mental health
  - g) Work and benefits – signposting and guidance
  - h) Homelessness Assistance
  - i) Community integration
  - j) Thank you payments for sponsors
  - k) Identifying where rent is being charged
  - l) Distribution of funding
11. An operational team has been established in order to ensure that the council are able to deliver all of the actions and activities outlined above. Enhanced DBS checks are carried out for all sponsors and anyone in their household aged 16 and over; this is being done by Hoople Ltd.
12. In addition to the operational team, the Homes for Ukraine Scheme has had a significant impact on a number of other council teams for whom additional resources have also been needed and are included in the proposals; Housing Solutions, English as an additional language (EAL) team, School admissions team, Safeguarding, Early Help, Talk Community, Community Commissioning and Finance. Decisions to allocate these additional resources have already been taken under delegated authority and recorded in Record of Officer Decisions in order to ensure timely provision of services.
13. From 15 July 2022, the Homes for Ukraine Scheme was expanded to eligible children who had already applied for visas through the scheme. The checks that are completed before a child arrives are the same as those for all Homes for Ukraine sponsors but will be supplemented by a pre-application (and pre-arrival for applications made before 15 July 2022) council-led assessment of the suitability of the prospective sponsorship arrangements for the eligible child. All children applying to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, who are not travelling with or joining a parent or legal guardian, must provide evidence of parental or legal guardian consent. Should the sponsorship arrangements breakdown, the council may have to accommodate a child under the duty at section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or take further necessary action such as

taking the child into care, while arrangements are being decided for the onward care of that child.

14. The government is providing additional funding to councils to provide education and childcare services for children from families arriving from Ukraine under this scheme. The Department for Education (DfE) are allocating funding, pro-rata on a per pupil basis for the 3 phases of education based on the following annual rates:
  - a) Early years (ages 2 to 4) - £3,000
  - b) Primary (ages 5 -11) - £6,580
  - c) Secondary (ages 11-18) - £8,755

These tariffs include support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Separate funding has also been made available to the NHS.

15. Over 135 Ukrainian children and young people have now been placed in primary and secondary schools across Herefordshire. This has prompted a need for additional capacity in the English as an additional language (EAL) team, who are in the process of recruiting two additional teaching staff to support schools across the county. Additional resource has also been agreed for the schools admissions team due to the extra demands made of this service. Many of the children and young people placed in schools are eligible for free school transport under the existing council policy and this is placing additional pressure on the budget for school transport. It is proposed that some of the grant funding is used to offset these costs.
16. In addition to schools, Ukrainian children and young people are accessing education through nurseries and colleges cross the county. The education funding outlined above will be distributed to these settings as required.
17. The Government have stated that councils should play a key role in supporting the integration of Ukrainian families into their local communities. The Government have given very little direct guidance about how this could be delivered, but have suggested that integration support might include the organisation of community events, the use of community champions and interfaith networks, increasing local authority contact/interaction with people from Ukraine, access to translation services and working with local voluntary sector organisations and faith groups to help signpost advice and support. In response to this the council has developed a grant scheme to support new and existing projects and activities in communities across Herefordshire that support the ongoing integration of Ukrainian guests into the community. Projects can be large or small and cover just one area or the whole county. The grant scheme is being administered by the councils delegated grants team and supported by Talk Community. The grant scheme opened to applications in early September 2022.
18. At the same time as the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme was launched, the Government also launched the Ukraine Family Visa Scheme. This visa route did not attract the same package of funding as the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, nor have councils been asked to have any involvement in the regulation of this scheme. This means that anyone arriving in Herefordshire through the family scheme is not eligible for any support e.g. no initial payment, no thank you payment for hosts and no education payments for schools who take Ukrainian children and young people arriving through this route.

## Community impact

19. The proposals set out in this paper and appendix A, fit with the County Plans ambition to strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together, specifically the proposals will protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people and ensure all children are healthy, safe and inspired to achieve.
20. The grant scheme aims to facilitate community integration in line with the findings of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which states that Living in a strong, diverse and cohesive community can provide a sense of identity, purpose and belonging. Strong local support networks can help prolong independent living. This strengths based approach links directly with Talk Community; the council's strategic approach to prevention, enabling people to get the assistance they need whilst managing demand for more specialist services.
21. Voluntary, charity and faith sector organisations across Herefordshire were very quick to respond to the needs of the Ukrainian community both in terms of providing aid and in providing local support networks for potential sponsors and their guests once they started to arrive in April 2022. Many of these support networks, groups and activities have now been running for 6 months, most of them are largely dependent upon existing staff and / or volunteers.
22. Some organisations have contacted the council to explain that they are running out of capacity and need paid support to continue their activities. The council have developed the community integration grant scheme in order to support these organisations as well as to encourage more organisations to develop community integration activities across the county, bringing together people from all communities to build relationships and foster understanding.
23. Demand for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) lessons has rapidly increased with the arrival of Ukrainian guests. The council's existing ESOL contract for refugee communities across the county came to an end in July 2022. A new specification for this service was developed taking into account the increased demand and the budget was increased with an allocation of funding from the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme grant. The new contract was awarded in September 2022 and ESOL will be delivered across Herefordshire for the next three years, benefiting both our existing refugee communities and hundreds of Ukrainian guests.
24. Sponsors and their guests are located throughout Herefordshire, some in very rural areas. Access to transport is an ongoing challenge to many of the Ukrainian families living in Herefordshire. Utilising existing networks and providers, a package of transport measures is proposed in order to support these families to access education, work healthcare and community integration opportunities.
25. Whilst the priority is to ensure as many sponsorship relationships as possible are sustainable and can support guests for six months and longer, in a minority of cases this will not be possible. Where there has been a breakdown of the sponsorship arrangements, the council will work with voluntary, community and faith sector partners to rematch Homes for Ukraine guests with new sponsors if at all possible.
26. When the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme was launched many sponsors thought that the arrangement would only be for six months. The £350 thank you payments for sponsors are currently available for up to 12 months, but the cost of living crisis is impacting on some sponsors ability to maintain sponsorship arrangements. As the cost of living continues to increase and as sponsorship arrangements come to the end of the initial 12 month term, it is forecast that the threat of homelessness will increase. A significant amount of the grant funding

has been requested to put a range of measures in place to prevent homelessness including additional staff resources, welfare payments, rent top ups and landlord incentives.

## **Environmental Impact**

27. In developing these proposals, care has been taken to make the very best use of existing resources, contracts and networks in order to ensure that the proposals do not contribute towards an increase in carbon emissions or wider pollution in line with the Council's Environmental Policy.
28. Some of the proposals include the commissioning of services. The environmental impact of each service will be considered through the service specification and include appropriate requirements on the contractor/delivery partner to minimise waste, reduce energy and carbon emissions and to consider opportunities to enhance biodiversity. This will be managed and reported through ongoing contract management. One example of this would be commitment to the local delivery of ESOL in a range of locations across the county, rather than expecting all participants to travel to Hereford.
29. Investment is requested to encourage use of public and community transport networks. Many Ukrainian families have been supported to access free bicycles donated by the community and are using this as a means of transport.
30. Herefordshire Council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.

## **Equality duty**

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
31. The proposals outlined in this decision seek to offer people fleeing the war in Ukraine the opportunity to live, work and integrate into the community in Herefordshire. People arriving in Herefordshire from the Ukraine are entitled to all of the services and support that is available to UK citizens, including those with protected characteristics.
  32. The community integration grant scheme seeks to foster good relations between people already living in Herefordshire and people from the Ukraine as they resettle. The aims of the grant scheme are to:
    - a. Ensure that Ukrainian guests feel welcome, safe and supported in Herefordshire.
    - b. Support hosting individuals and families to feel confident in supporting their guests.

- c. Build strong relationships in and across communities through community integration activities.
  - d. Sustain the relationship between hosts and guests
  - e. Create opportunities for education, training and employment.
  - f. Promoting better understanding of refugee experiences.
33. Some of the activities proposed will be commissioned. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.

### Resource implications

34. The final budget for the Homes for Ukraine is not yet established as the council receives the funding upon arrival and there is no end date to the scheme at present, so it is anticipated that people from the Ukraine will continue to arrive into at least the next financial year. All guests receive grant funding for twelve months from the date of their arrival. This means that for the majority of guests the funding will be distributed across two financial years. The spend plan is therefore indicative, with the final budget for each year being based on the actual number of arrivals.
35. A forecast maximum of 900 guests has been used in order to establish a budget for 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years. This has been profiled by estimated arrival numbers and when it is predicted that the costs of support are most likely to be incurred. A project board has been established and the scheme has been added to Verto in order to ensure effective management of resources.
36. The increasing demand on existing council resources has been carefully considered to ensure that additional capacity is made available where it is needed as outlined in the text above and in the spend plan in appendix A. Whilst the budget below has been initially profiled across two financial years this profiling is subject to change as the scheme develops. Any increasing rates of inflation will need to be managed within the overall budget.
37. Any procurement undertaken will comply with the council's contract procedure rules.

Revenue or Capital cost of project (indicate R or C)	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Future Years	Total
This grant is revenue only.	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Initial payment to guests - £200 per guest, up to 900 guests		120	60		180
Operational Costs -		1106	1107		2213
Housing Initiatives -		579	2000		2579
Education Initiatives		100	344		444
Transport Initiatives		179	500		679
Community Integration Initiatives		495	2000		2495
Contingency		0	860		860
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2579</b>	<b>6871</b>		<b>9450</b>

<b>Funding streams (indicate whether base budget / external / grant / capital borrowing)</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>Future Years</b>	<b>Total</b>
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme grant funding from Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities. Based on up to 900 guests.</i>		2579	6871		9450
<b>TOTAL</b>		2579	6871		9450

<b>Revenue budget implications</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>Future Years</b>	<b>Total</b>
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<i>There will be no impact on the revenue budget from the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship scheme as all of the costs are covered by the Government Grant as outlined above.</i>					
<b>TOTAL</b>					

### **Legal implications**

38. There are no specific legal implications but there are mandatory grant conditions as set out in relevant Government guidance that must be complied with.

### **Risk management**

39. There are a range of risks and opportunities linked to this scheme as outlined below:



Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
<p>Risk - Lack of funding for the Ukraine Family Scheme means that not all costs (schools / housing etc) will be covered and not all families resettling in Herefordshire will have equality of opportunity as a result. As well as a financial risk, there is also a reputational risk for the council as it could be perceived that this inequality is the result of a council decision or policy.</p>	<p>There is no clear mitigation for the lack of funding for the Ukraine Family Scheme. However, all Ukrainians are entitled to access services, benefits and work opportunities. Clear communication about the two schemes may help to reduce the reputational risk to the council.</p>
<p>Risk - Lack of funding to deliver the activities in the spend proposal in Appendix A.</p>	<p>The spend proposal has been carefully considered and can be delivered in a way that is proportionate to the budget as it increased as more guests arrive. A baseline of 450 guests was initially set, so there is certainty that the proposals can be delivered now that the number of guests has exceeded this baseline.</p>
<p>Risk - It is anticipated that some sponsors may seek to end their sponsorship arrangements for affordability reasons due to the cost of living crisis, increasing the risk of homelessness among Ukrainian guests.</p>	<p>A significant budget has been allocated to prevent homelessness. This includes budgets for additional staff resources, rent top ups and landlord incentives.</p>
<p>Opportunity - The community integration grant scheme has been developed to enhance opportunities for Ukrainian guests to integrate into life in Herefordshire through training, work and social activities. In addition the grant scheme offers the opportunity to enhance existing projects and develop new activities. The grant scheme is also focused on enabling Ukrainian guests to share their experiences of resettling in Herefordshire with the aim of fostering a better understanding in the community and for services to learn more about the challenges for people resettling in the county.</p>	
<p>Opportunity - Ukrainian guests will make a contribution to the community and the economy as they settle into life in the county.</p>	

40. Risks will be managed through the established project board via a risk register and will be escalated as required.

## Consultees

41. The spend plan outlined in appendix A has been developed through engagement with a wide range of Council services and through wider consultation with voluntary and community organisations including HVOSS, Kindle Centre, Hereford City of Sanctuary and faith organisations. These groups are already working with Ukrainians in Herefordshire and have informed the spend proposal and specifically the development of the community integration grant scheme.
42. The proposal has been reviewed through internal governance processes and at a Cabinet Briefing held on the 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022.
43. A political group consultation was carried out on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> September. The following matters were raised and discussed:
  - a. In relation to funding it was confirmed that the proposals are fully funded by the Homes for Ukraine Grant.
  - b. A query was raised regarding increasing rates of inflation, these will be accounted for within the existing budget and a contingency sum has been included.
  - c. A question was raised regarding the implications on Council Tax for sponsors? The Government issued new regulations in April 2022 to protect sponsors' council tax discounts for single persons and limit the impact on council tax payments for those sponsoring a family in a second property.
  - d. Councillors expressed concern about the mental health and wellbeing of Ukrainian guests and their families. Ukrainian guests are able to access mental health services in Herefordshire and the Community Integration Grant Scheme includes a clear focus on mental health and wellbeing.

No objections were raised with regard to the proposed spend plan.

## Appendices

Appendix A – Homes for Ukraine Spend Proposal (Excel)

### Background papers

- [Homes for Ukraine Guidance for Councils](#)
- [Ukraine Community Integration Grant Scheme - Talk Community Directory](#)

## Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

**Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published**

Governance	Sarah Buffrey, Democratic Services Officer	Date 06/09/2022
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Finance	Kim Wratten	Date 15/09/2022
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Legal	Samantha Evans	Date 15/09/2022
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 04/09/2022
Equality Duty	Carol Trachonitis	Date 06/09/2022
Procurement	Mark Cage	Date 08/09/2022
Risk	Jo Needs	Date 13/09/2022

Approved by Hilary Hall – Corporate Director Community Wellbeing Date 04/10/2022

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**