

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to make additional payments to Homes for Ukraine Sponsors to support them with the increased costs of hosting over the winter months November 2024 to March 2025
Date of decision:	16.10.24
Decision maker:	Service Director, All Age Commissioning, Community Wellbeing
Authority for delegated decision:	The Support for Ukraine Cabinet decision made in October 2022 approved authority delegated to the Corporate Director for Community Wellbeing to take all operational and budgetary decisions in relation to the proposals and the implementation set out in the Support for Ukraine report, including the use of contingency sums and budget variations within the overall approved budget.
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	<p>Feedback on the need to support hosts in their sponsorship role has been received from a range of stakeholders as well as Housing Services and the Homes for Ukraine Operational Team.</p> <p>Supporting sponsorship arrangements to continue, reduces the demand on temporary accommodation and homelessness services. As well as reducing the risk of homelessness, sustaining the relationships between guests and sponsors also supports community integration as guests become more imbedded in the local community over time and children benefit from a sustained period in local schools etc.</p>
Decision made:	An additional payment of £250 per month to be made to each Homes for Ukraine sponsor for the months of November 2024 through to the end of March 2025. New hosting arrangements during that period will qualify for pro rata payments.
Reasons for decision:	<p>As of the 30th September 2024, 860 Ukrainian guests have arrived in Herefordshire. There are currently about 200 guests staying with 90 hosts.</p> <p>It should be noted that Herefordshire Council has already decided (Record of Officer Decision – 22.03.23) to top up the Government’s £350 payment to sponsors whose guests have been with them for up to a year, so that all sponsors receive £500 per month. The payment to hosts for guests after a year will remain at £500, which is the amount of the Government’s payment for the second and third year of a guest’s stay.</p> <p>The additional monthly winter payments of £250 means that each sponsor will receive a total of £750 per month between November 2024 and March 2025. If sponsors start hosting Ukrainian guests during this period, they will be paid the additional winter payment pro rata for the months of the guests’ stay. Thereafter (April 2025) the thank you payments to sponsor will revert to £500 per month.</p> <p>Payments will be made through the Homes for Ukraine operational team. The team already manage the thank you payments to hosts.</p>
Equality Considerations	The proposals in the Support for Ukraine Cabinet report in October 22 sought “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”. It is anticipated that increasing the thank you payments over the winter period will sustain the host / guest sponsorship

	arrangements and continue to give Ukrainians the opportunity to remain in a supportive environment, including those with protected characteristics.
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>It is estimated that making the additional winter payments will cost approximately £112,500. All of the costs in this decision will be met by funding provided by the Government to facilitate and support the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme outlined below.</p> <p>The Government has agreed to pay local authorities as part of the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme £10,500 per Ukrainian guest arriving by 31st December 2022 and £5,900 after this date. It should be noted that government provides separate funding for thankyou payments to sponsors (£350 per month for the guest's 1st year and £500 for 2nd and 3rd years).</p>
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>Not to make an additional payment to sponsors: this option is not recommended as cost of living pressures continue to be an issue, with the energy price cap increasing by 10% on 1st October 2024. If sponsors are ending sponsorship arrangements on the basis that they can't afford to continue to host any longer, guests may have to access homelessness services. The pressure on temporary accommodation is significant, with the likelihood that families may have to move out of county, away from their schools and the community that they have begun to establish themselves in.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed..... Date: 18/10/2024