

## Record of operational decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	Decision to provide Homes for Ukraine sponsors with additional payments with effect from 1 April 2025
<b>Date of decision:</b>	03.01.25
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Service Director, All Age Commissioning, Community Wellbeing
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	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.
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide
<b>Consultation:</b>	<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>
<b>Decision made:</b>	A payment of £150 per month to be made to each eligible Homes for Ukraine sponsor, for the length of their Ukrainian guests' visa under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and subsequent Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme visa. This is in response to central government's decision that it will only pay thank you payments at a flat rate of £350 per month, with effect from 1 April 2025 up to the end of the 18 month Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme.
<b>Reasons for decision:</b>	<p>It should be noted that Herefordshire Council had already decided (<a href="#">Record of Officer Decision – 22.03.23</a>) to top up the Government's £350 thank you payment to sponsors whose guests have been with them for up to a year. If the guests stayed for more than one year, central government increased its thank you payment of £500 for the second and third year of a guest's stay. Herefordshire Council's decision effectively meant that all sponsors received £500 per month under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, however long their guests had been with them.</p> <p>The decision now taken is to maintain this position so that sponsors continue to receive £500 per month whilst the Ukrainian guests are there under their Homes for Ukraine scheme visa and subsequently under the Ukraine Permission Scheme which is for a further 18 months. This decision will be continue to be in place at least until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 and as long as is required thereafter, subject to funding.</p> <p>Supporting sponsorship arrangements to continue, reduces the demand on temporary accommodation and homelessness services. As well as reducing the risk of homelessness, this decision also supports community integration and children benefit from a sustained period in local schools etc.</p> <p>Payments will be made through the Homes for Ukraine operational team. The team already manage the thank you payments to hosts.</p>
<b>Equality Considerations</b>	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 continuing to offer sponsors £500 monthly thank you payments will help sustain the host / guest sponsorship arrangements and continue to give Ukrainians the opportunity to remain in a supportive environment, including those with protected characteristics.
<b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b>	As of 18 <sup>th</sup> December 2024, 866 Ukrainian guests have arrived in Herefordshire. Of these there are currently 190 guests staying with 94 hosts. Based on these figures, the cost of this decision would be £169,200 for 2025/26. All of the costs in this decision will be met by funding provided by the central government to facilitate and support the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme outlined below. Central government has agreed to pay local authorities as part of the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme £10,500 per Ukrainian guest arriving by 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2022 and £5,900 after this date. It should be noted that government provides separate funding for the thankyou payments to sponsors.
<b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b>	Not to make an additional payment to sponsors: this option is not recommended as cost of living pressures continue to be an issue. 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 families potentially having to move out of county, away from schools and the community that they have begun to establish themselves in.
<b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b>	None

Signed..... Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2025