

Surrey Heath Borough Council

Executive

20 September 2022

Afghan Relocation and Assistance Schemes – Wraparound Support

Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Sarah-Jane Croke, Housing, Safeguarding and Support
Strategic Director/Head of Service	Nick Steevens
Report Author:	Emily Burrill – Family Support Team Manager
Key Decision:	No
Date Portfolio Holder signed off the report	31st August 2022
Wards Affected:	Town (in the first instance)

Summary and purpose

This report sets out the Home Office plan for the provision of temporary accommodation in Camberley as part of the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Scheme and seeks agreement for the Council's participation in supporting Afghan families through the Family Support Team.

Recommendation

The Executive is advised to RESOLVE that Surrey Heath Borough Council participates in the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Scheme – Wraparound Support by agreeing to support families who are placed in temporary accommodation in the six units of accommodation in Camberley Town Centre through the Family Support Team.

1. Background and Supporting Information

- 1.1 The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Schemes were launched in July 2021 and focused on those who served alongside British armed forces in Afghanistan and provided important support to Her Majesty's Government defence and security mission there. This predominantly related to those who were employed directly by the British Armed Forces, or in certain special cases via contractors, or those working in support of British interests who were likely to be killed as a result of their work.
- 1.2 Surrey Heath Borough Council made an early commitment to directly support 5 families. These families arrived in the borough in August 2021 and the Council has been successful in supporting these families into settled

accommodation in the private sector and meaningful employment.

- 1.3 Many families who arrived in the UK under this scheme were also placed by the Government in 'Bridging Hotels' where they continue to reside. In the South East, there are 3 Bridging Hotels which due to the relaxation of Covid regulations and the increase in local travel and tourism will no longer be the Government's preferred approach.
- 1.4 The Home Office and South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) are looking to relocate those families currently in bridging hotels into smaller units of temporary accommodation in the South East.
- 1.5 The Home Office have identified apartments in Boroughs and Districts to be used as Temporary accommodation. In Surrey Heath, six units of accommodation have been identified in Camberley Town Centre. These consist of one bedroom apartments, which would hold a maximum capacity of two people, such as a couple, a couple with a baby under 1 year old or single people.
- 1.6 Appropriate accommodation has been secured by the Home Office for a minimum of 6 months, up to 1 year. Those placed in the apartments, will have been residing in the UK previously, for up to a year. These apartments are fully funded by the Home Office.
- 1.7 The identified apartments have an allocated Home Office Liaison Officer who attends weekly. Their responsibility is to liaise between residents and the apartment provider to help maintain a successful arrangement and mediate if there are any concerns in relation to the residents or their accommodation.
- 1.8 New funding instructions for participating local authorities have been created and published. Funding available for local authorities will be £28 per day per person. For illustration, if two people were placed in each of the 6 apartments for 6 months, this would equate to £61,500. This funding would be paid to the Council for the services provided by its Family Support Team. Separate additional funding would be allocated directly to health and social care and education to support with costs of GP's, schooling etc.
- 1.9 The role of the Borough Council would be to support guests to focus on accessing employment, normal day to day life and help with securing longer term settled accommodation in the private rented sector. They will already be set up with Universal Credit, have awareness of health care arrangements in the UK and have already accessed a level of English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes.
- 1.10 At the end of the time in the secured accommodation, the Council would have discretion on whether it continues to support those residents or not. If the residents found permanent accommodation in the borough, the Council would have the option to claim Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) funding as it does with other Afghan families (3 year support and funding

package).

- 1.11 If residents move out of the apartments before the contracted end, the Home Office would continue to use the accommodation to place new residents.
- 1.12 Should residents refuse appropriate permanent accommodation on more than 2 occasions and subsequently become homeless, additional funding is in place from the Home Office to cover these costs which are set out in Section 9 of this report.
- 1.13 The Home Office have confirmed they intend to commence placing residents in the temporary accommodation from September. The use of the temporary accommodation in Camberley will proceed irrespective of whether the Council chooses to participate in the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Schemes. To date there is only 1 other local authority in the UK who is taking part in this level of support but this is likely to change over the coming months as the Home Office progressively move away from the use of Bridging Hotels.

2. Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 The Home Office are seeking to work in partnership with the Council to support residents out of bridging and temporary arrangements and into more permanent accommodation. The Home Office are contending with bridging hotels which are at capacity and impacted by the ending of contracts alongside new residents arriving. It is therefore likely that unless there were resounding overriding concerns expressed by the Council about the proposed accommodation, the Home Office will proceed with placing residents in the identified apartments irrespective of whether the Council intended to participate in the scheme.

3. Proposal and Alternative Options

- 3.1 The proposal is to work with the Home Office in supporting families and individuals who are placed in the borough. The Family Support Programme would be providing practical support in signposting to employment opportunities and permanent accommodation.
- 3.2 The alternative option is that the Council does not agree to supporting families and individuals placed in the borough through this scheme. This option would increase the risk of these families becoming homeless and presenting at the Borough Council offices. Under this scheme, the Council can claim £3,280 for an accepted homeless duty and temporary accommodation for one household over 6 months. The cost of placing a couple in B&B for 3 months would be in the region of £4,000 so the available funding would not cover temporary accommodation costs or the additional administrative burden.

4. Contribution to the Council's Five Year Strategy

- 4.1 Effective and Responsive Council
Working together with the Home Office and SESPM to continue positive,

professional working relationships meets the objectives of the Council's Five Year Strategy. Adopting the recommendations of this report will ensure services and support are delivered in the most financially efficient way.

4.2 Health and Quality of Life

Ensuring the most vulnerable are supported to access a safe, quality home and reducing their risk of homelessness. Guidance and support from Council officers will reduce the risk of long term unemployment and support individuals to reduce the risk of exploitation.

5. Resource Implications

5.1 Support would be provided to individuals and families from the current team resource. At this stage, additional staffing is not proposed and therefore does not represent a specific resource implication.

5.2 £28 per person, per day is available to the Borough Council to cover resource costs.

6. Section 151 Officer Comments:

6.1 As with all central government grant funding schemes, care should be taken to ensure that the Council is not left with any legacy costs once the funding stream comes to an end.

7. Legal and Governance Issues

7.1 Although functions and services related to housing are delegated to the Strategic Director of Environment and Community, officers may refer decisions to the Executive where appropriate. The Family Support Team Manager considers referral to the Executive is appropriate given the public interest in the subject matter of this report.

8. Monitoring Officer Comments:

8.1 No matters arising.

9. Other Considerations and Impacts

9.1 With regard the refusal by a resident of 2 accommodation placements (as per point 1.8) the Home Office is seeking to move the decision making from central to local government. The initial two offers are likely to be from the Council however, refusal for no good reasons then triggers an ending of the Home Office accommodation and a transfer of the accommodation duty to the Council under homelessness legislation. The Council can discharge its homeless duty by one offer of suitable accommodation and due the scarce availability of accommodation may offer the same accommodation under both the Home Office scheme and through its homeless duty. If the accommodation is not accepted at either point the duty to offer accommodation is ended. Whilst there is no appeals process under the

Home Office scheme, when the homelessness duty is ended it can be challenged first by internal review and then by County Court appeal.

9.2 There is an awareness and understanding that this scheme comes at the same time as the Homes from Ukraine scheme. In a borough with a very limited supply of affordable private sector accommodation for rent to meet local need include homeless households, the Family Support Team would account for this as part of their wider remit, to ensure those in greatest need are prioritised for places in settled accommodation.

9.3 As the individuals and families in the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Wraparound Support Scheme do not have family and local connections in the borough, we would look to encourage them to explore opportunities over a wider geographical area to find more affordable private accommodation alongside access to good employment.

Environment and Climate Change

9.4 No matters arising.

Equalities and Human Rights

9.5 Individuals eligible for this support are those who

- 1) Assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights and freedom of speech, the rule of law; and vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk.
- 2) Served alongside our armed forces in Afghanistan and provided important support to Her Majesty's Government defence and security mission there, predominantly those who were employed directly, or in certain special cases via contractors, and who are assessed to be at serious risk as a result of such work. It is available to people regardless of rank or role, or length of time served, and builds on the long-standing support already available.

Risk Management

9.6 No matters arising.

Community Engagement

9.7 No matters arising.

Annexes

None

Background Papers

None