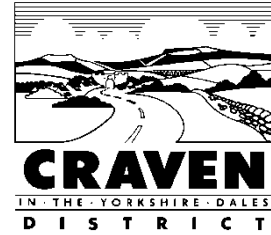


Policy Committee – 26th January 2016

SYRIAN REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT



Report of the Director of Services

Lead Member: Richard Foster

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of Report:

To inform members of the current position with regard to the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Craven and seek approval for Craven District Council to take part in the Syrian Refugee resettlement scheme

2. **Recommendations** – Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Agree to support a North Yorkshire wide Syrian Refugee resettlement scheme
- 2.2 Agree that the Council's commitment to this scheme shall be no more than 25 Syrian refugees;
- 2.3 Give delegated authority to the Chief Executive to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with North Yorkshire County Council and the other North Yorkshire District Councils concerning this scheme;
- 2.4 Give delegated authority to the Director of Services to:
 - i. enter into an agreement with Migration Yorkshire to enable overall regional co-ordination and support.
 - ii. vary existing nomination agreements with Registered Providers to enable the allocation of social housing to the Syrian refugees;
- 2.5 Agree that the Council should become a pilot authority for the North Yorkshire resettlement scheme

3. **Background**

- 3.1 In September 2015, the Government committed to accepting up to 20,000 Syrian refugees into the United Kingdom from refugee camps in countries neighbouring Syria.

- 3.2 Those who are accepted will be granted a five year humanitarian protection visa before they enter the UK and have the same rights as UK citizens to education, employment, health care and public funds. Unaccompanied children will not be included.
- 3.3 Local authorities have been asked to participate in the resettlement scheme, and Craven District Council, along with all the other local authorities in Yorkshire and Humber have agreed to assist “in principle”. It is for each authority to decide the number of refugees that they are willing to resettle, however the common approach has been to agree a figure based on percentage of population size. Across North Yorkshire this equates to 200 people, with Cravens “share” estimated at a maximum of 25 individuals over the next 5 years. We anticipate that these will be in family groups rather than single people.
4. **The North Yorkshire Scheme**
- 4.1 Local Government North Yorkshire and York agreed in October 2015 that the North Yorkshire district councils and North Yorkshire County Council would form a partnership to develop a joint approach to resettlement, and several planning meetings have now taken place. The County Council will be the lead authority and project manage the operational delivery of the scheme, including the procurement of specialist support services.
- 4.2 The key role of the district authorities will be the sourcing of suitable accommodation. Given local levels of housing need and the scarcity of social housing, our preferred housing solution is to source accommodation from the private sector and we have had tentative discussions with a local letting agent who has indicated their willingness to assist.
- 4.3 In the event that we are unable to source sufficient accommodation from the private sector, then we would have to approach our registered provider partners, who have indicated their support for the scheme. This may require the allocation of properties outside of existing nomination agreements, and members are asked to give delegated authority to the Director of Services to vary any agreements as necessary.
- 4.4 We have identified Skipton and South Craven as our preferred areas for resettlement as they have the largest housing stock, available school places, a wide range of services and easy access to Bradford where there is an existing Syrian refugee community and specialist services.
- 4.5 The original intention was that each local authority would resettle a small number of refugees in their area each year, however experience from other local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber region is that the support needs of refugees are intensive, especially in the first few weeks and months following arrival. The rapid deployment of a range of services is required in order to ensure that refugees are provided with the right level of specialist support to allow them to successfully integrate into the community.

- 4.6 The above 'scattergun' approach, whilst ensuring that each district would be seen to be resettling its 'fair share' of refugees, would make it difficult to co-ordinate support services and build sufficient capacity quickly enough.
- 4.7 The proposal is therefore that there is an initial pilot scheme in one area of North Yorkshire, which will work by resettling a small number of families in a combined 'block' of two/three districts. Such an approach would make it easier to comprehensively manage the process and build up expertise. A review of the process could then take place before additional refugees were resettled in other suitable parts of the county in future years.
- 4.8 Craven with either one or two neighboring partners have been proposed as authorities for the initial pilot. If members agree with the proposal, then we would anticipate refugees arriving in summer 2016, subject to suitable accommodation being available and support services in place.
- 4.9 The Home Office pays a grant to local authorities to cover all of the costs incurred in setting up and operating the scheme for the first 12 months. Costs will include management of the scheme, housing costs, set up costs of accommodation, cultural integration including English language provision, and the provision of specialist and intensive support. It is anticipated that the grant payable will be in the region of £8,500 per person to be divided between the County Council and district authorities.
- 4.10 Due to the complex nature of the resettlement process, it is essential that all partners are clear about their responsibilities and commitments in relation to the resettlement of the refugees. A Memorandum of Understanding is in the process of being drafted which will set out partner authorities obligations.
5. **Regional Support**
- 5.1 The Home Office funds regional strategic migration partnerships throughout the United Kingdom. Migration Yorkshire is the partnership for Yorkshire and Humber Region and their role is to ensure that the region can respond to migration and provide support to local authorities.
- 5.2 Migration Yorkshire is advising local authorities to agree to a regional delivery model. They will provide strategic leadership and co-ordination, managing the contract with the Home Office and negotiating with NHS England, Police and other key agencies on our behalf. They will also manage practical aspects such as arranging the charter flights for the refugees, collecting them from the airport and transporting them to the region – **Appendix 1**
- 5.3 It is recommended that the Council agrees to participate in the wider regional context. There are no cost implications to the Council of entering into such an agreement, as any costs will be met by the grant paid from the Home Office.

6. **Implications**

6.1 **Financial Implications.**

There are no financial implications for the authority.

6.2 **Legal Implications:**

These are set out in the body of the report.

7. **Contribution to Council Priorities:**

This does not directly relate to any of the Council Plan Priorities.

8. **Risk Management:**

There are no strategic risk management issues arising from the report.

9. **Equality Analysis:**

The resettlement of refugees in the Craven district will require a full equality analysis, and it is acknowledged that there is the potential for unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. As we intend taking a partnership approach to the issue the partnership Councils will undertake a comprehensive equality analysis which will become available in the coming months.

It will be crucial that the Council is proactive in fostering good relations between the refugees and the existing community and help them to positively integrate. A key element of the local response will be to work with local support groups and ensure close co-ordination of agencies along with a clear communications plan.

10. **Consultations with Others:** Financial Services, Legal Services, Community Development, North Yorkshire Police, North Yorkshire County Council

11. **Access to Information : Background Documents:**

None

12. **Author of the Report:**

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13. **Appendices:**

Appendix 1- Migration Yorkshire proposal for Regional Syrian Resettlement.