

Report To:	Scrutiny Panel B	Date:	27th September 2018
Heading:	SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME (SVPR)		
Portfolio Holder:	PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING – CLLR J WILMOTT		
Ward/s:	ALL		
Key Decision:	NO		
Subject to Call-In:			

Purpose of Report

To enable Scrutiny Panel members to consider and review the Council's role in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme (SVPR).

This report will detail the background to the SVPR, the Council's involvement to date and role going forward.

Recommendation(s)

Members are requested to;

- 1. Take note of the content of this report**
- 2. To consider and comment upon the Council's role in the SVPR**

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The Council is required to fulfil its obligations in resettling an agreed number of Syrian refugee families. We are part way through this process and so it is a good opportunity to review progress and consider changes and improvements to service.

Alternative Options Considered (With Reasons Why Not Adopted)

None

Detailed Information

Background

On 14th March 2017 the Council accepted its first two refugee families (x2 families of 6) under the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement scheme (SVPR). A further two families were resettled in Ashfield in November 2017 The families have been identified as

needing resettlement by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and have been nominated for rehousing in the UK.

Under the scheme the Government has committed to resettle up to 20,000 Syrian refugees between 2016 and 2020. The Council has committed to accommodate 46 individuals, this equates to 8 – 10 families.

The SVPR scheme is voluntary for local authorities (LA) but the Government is relying on LA's to help them meet their obligations and there is an expectation that all LA's will participate.

Under the terms of the SVPR refugee families are accommodated for a 5 year period in the first instance. Decisions on whether families stay in this country or return to Syria will be made at the end of their stay.

The Council receives a grant from the Home Office to support each individual refugee. The grant is expected to meet the cost of preparing the properties and for all support that the families need. It is not expected to cover the cost of education (for children) or health services. The annual grant per refugee reduces over the 5 year period, as individual and families become more independent and require less support. There is no financial contribution from the Council or County Council.

Partnership working

The Council works closely with Mansfield District Council (MDC) to coordinate the scheme, drawing on the expertise they have developed by housing SVPR families ahead of us.

In addition, resettlement and community support is provided by Tuntum Housing's Supported Housing Service which has been working with refugees for a number of years.

Faith groups have provided a significant amount of support to the families, providing volunteering opportunities, securing employment for one parent, invitations to social events, support with homework and after school activities.

Housing

Three families have been housed by housing association partners and one in a property acquired by a local church as an investment.

Resettlement and Community support

Families are supported by the Council and its partners to settle into the community and live independently. The support provided includes:

- Sustaining their tenancy
- Claiming benefits
- Learning English
- Accessing employment and training opportunities for the parents
- Settling children into school
- Accessing places of worship
- Understanding English culture
- Getting involved in the local community
- Accessing the health system

All 4 families quickly settled in to the local community. Addressing issues relating to health, language skills, education and income were a priority but very quickly the families moved beyond that and became engaged in social and faith based activities, employment and volunteering.

Within a matter of days the children were playing with others on the street and the parents too have developed a strong bond and very positive relationship with their neighbours and others on their street.

Many of the children have excelled at school, with positive school reports about their standard of English and quality of their school work. Some children have been appointed as prefects had have won awards such as 'pupil of the school'.

Future intake

The Council has committed to resettle a further two families in November 2018 and is working to identify suitable properties for these families. A final two families should arrive in mid 2019.

Lessons learnt

- It is important to support families to become independent and not create dependencies as support is reduced each year
- Community and faith groups are a great source of support though care must be taken to ensure they also enable independence and offer appropriate support
- Reasonable assumptions can be wrong. Concerns about how the families may be received by neighbours and the local community were unfounded. Neighbours have been very supportive and in some cases protective of the families. Likewise, an expectation that the families would develop close relations with one another has not proved to be the case.
- The key to becoming part of the local community and to unlocking opportunities, such as employment, has been language skills. Commencing English language lessons as soon as possible has been important in achieving this.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The work fits in with our Communities and Environment aim of enabling thriving, prosperous and self-sufficient communities where people shape their own futures

Legal:

No issues identified

Finance:

Budget Area	Implication
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General Fund – Revenue Budget	Not applicable
General Fund – Capital Programme	Not applicable
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	Not applicable
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	Not applicable

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
No issues identified	

Human Resources:

No issues identified

Equalities:

No issues identified

Other Implications:

None

Reason(s) for Urgency (if applicable):

Background Papers

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