

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>COUNCIL</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM: 10</b>
<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>19 JANUARY 2023</b>	<b>CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED</b>
<b>REPORT FROM:</b>	<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (SERVICE DELIVERY)</b>	<b>EXEMPT:</b>
<b>MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:</b>	<b>MATT HOLFORD - HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, PAUL WHITTINGHAM – HEAD OF HOUSING SERVICES</b>	<b>DOC:</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>HOMES FOR UKRAINE</b>	<b>REF:</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE: FM05/08</b>

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## **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1 That Council approve the creation of a new temporary (18 month) Tenancy Sustainment Officer post dedicated to supporting the delivery of Homes for Ukraine and Asylum Dispersal demands upon the local authority.
- 1.2 That Council approve the continuation of the temporary restructure of Environmental Services described in the report to F&M Committee on 10 February 2022 until such time as the temporary Tenancy Sustainment Officer position is occupied.
- 1.3 That all existing revenue costs incurred to date and which are associated with the delivery of the Homes for Ukraine scheme are met from the Homes for Ukraine funding provided by Derbyshire County Council.
- 1.4 That the remaining funding described in this report be apportioned into existing capital funds and made available to officers in Housing Services and Environmental Services to draw down in order to provide the appropriate support for clients described in government guidance on the Homes for Ukraine scheme and Asylum Dispersal.

## **2. Purpose of Report**

- 2.1 To advise Council of the funding which has recently been received by the local authority to meet its obligations under the Homes for Ukraine and Asylum Dispersal schemes.
- 2.2 To seek Council approval for the allocation of that funding to enable the council to meet its duties.

## **3. Background**

### **Asylum Dispersal**

- 3.1 Up until summer 2022 Asylum Dispersal (AD) had only been distributed across 40% of Council areas in England. Due to the pressures on the AD system, it is now mandatory for all Local Authority areas to accept a proportion of asylum seekers.

- 3.2 Management of the various AD schemes is currently being administered locally by East Midlands Councils and Derbyshire County Council.
- 3.3 To date South Derbyshire has been relatively unaffected by Asylum Dispersal. In spring 2022 the Mercure Hotel in Newton Solney started being used as Asylum Contingency Accommodation housing for approximately 70 single male asylum seekers. The accommodation is being managed by SERCO.

### **Homes for Ukraine**

- 3.4 Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, it is estimated that 13 million Ukrainians have been displaced and five million have left the country to seek safety elsewhere.
- 3.5 The UK government has two schemes to enable displaced Ukrainians to come to the UK
  - a family visa scheme for Ukrainians who have an immediate or extended family member in the UK. This has currently enabled 25,500 Ukrainians to join their families in the UK.
  - The Homes for Ukraine (H4U) scheme was set up to allow those without relatives in the UK to relocate. People in the UK can nominate an individual or family to stay with them rent-free for at least six months. Visitors who come via the scheme will be able to live and work in the UK for up to three years, and have access to healthcare, welfare and schools. Approximately 100,000 Ukrainian guests have been accommodated in the UK.
- 3.6 The overall management of the H4U scheme is by Derbyshire County Council. It has been reported that approximately 1,200 Ukrainian guests have been accommodated across Derbyshire and that approximately 1,500 visas have been applied for.
- 3.7 Approximately 130 Ukrainian are currently living in South Derbyshire.

## **4. Expectations of Local Authorities**

### **Asylum Dispersal**

- 4.1 SERCO have been contracted to lead on AD in the East Midlands. This involves organising temporary short stay accommodation in hotels, but increasingly this will involve finding private rented properties in which to provide longer term accommodation for asylum seekers (AS) on a 7-year lease.
- 4.2 Current proposals are that when a property is identified by SERCO as being suitable as AD accommodation, this will be communicated with the relevant Council who will have 5 days to comment on the proposals and confirm if they are supportive. The Council does not have right of veto but can express opposition to the proposal with an evidence-based rationale.
- 4.3 Once occupied, SERCO will inspect properties every month. Migrant Help will provide telephone support for asylum seekers in contingency accommodation, but there will be a reliance on local infrastructure to provide support. Once an asylum claim is resolved, AS's will be given 28 days-notice if it has been successful and 21 days-notice if not.
- 4.4 There are potential implications for Council's Homelessness Services if successful AS choose to remain in the local area.

## **Homes for Ukraine**

4.5 DLUHC have published [guidance for Councils](#) in relation to H4U.

4.6 Based on the guidance, the main functions which will fall to District Councils are;

- Pre arrival checks on the suitability of the sponsor and the safety of the proposed accommodation for the guest.
- Guest safeguarding and welfare checks after their arrival, particularly with attention to exploitation and trafficking, modern slavery, domestic abuse, child abuse, child exploitation and criminal exploitation.
- General advisory support for both the guest and sponsor to enable them to access all relevant public services.
- Supporting the integration of Ukrainian families into their local communities.
- Sponsor / guest conflict resolution to prevent sponsorship breakdown.
- Engagement with voluntary and support organisations providing support for people on the scheme.
- Rematching of the guest to an alternative sponsor in the event of sponsorship breakdown.
- Homelessness support and provision for the guest in the event of sponsorship breakdown.
- Data management and data processing on the Foundry case management system (CMS).
- Fraud identification and debt recovery.

4.7 While this list of tasks appears to be relatively simple, in practice it consists of a complex and diverse mix of activities. The activities reflect the complexity of dealing with language barriers, cultural differences and relationship breakdowns within a scheme which was developed and implemented at speed. Given the speed with which the scheme was implemented it has a number of flaws and significant areas of uncertainty which the officers delivering the scheme will need to navigate with care.

## **5. Finance**

### **Asylum Dispersal**

5.1 Lower Tier Authorities have received a one-off payment of £250, per Asylum Seeker in their area on the 27 March 2022. Lower tier authorities will also receive £3,500 for each new bedspace in their area. This funding is completely un-ringfenced.

5.2 To date SDDC has received a single payment of £17,750, which reflects the number of asylum seekers resident in the Mercure hotel on the date of the allocation.

### **Homes for Ukraine**

5.3 Derbyshire County Council receive all of the government funding support for the H4U scheme. Derbyshire County Council have recently approved the following trickle-down funding to district councils;

- £300 reimbursement for each of the H4U property checks completed and full cost recovery for all emergency accommodation costs incurred up to 31st October 2022.
  - A one-off fixed allocation of funding of £50,000 for each Council to be supplemented by a payment of £2,000 per host household to support administration, re-housing, prevention of homelessness and any future emergency accommodation costs.
  - Reimbursement of £300 for any new accommodation checks completed from 1 November 2022 plus any new statutory costs.
- 5.4 There is no explicit agreement between the County and District Councils about how the respective support functions for the H4U scheme will be administered. This matter remains the subject of ongoing discussions at operational level.
- 5.5 Given that 60 H4U sponsors were hosting Ukrainian guests in November 2022, the allocation of funds is described in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Households	Pre- checks	Initial Resource Lump sum	Weighted £2k household payment	Emergency Accommodation Costs (awaiting costings)	Total payment due Nov 22
60	£18,000	£50,000	£120,000	0	£188,000

- 5.6 Overall, therefore the Council has received £205,750 to support the AD and H4U schemes.
- 5.7 There will be additional funding from Derbyshire County Council if additional H4U guests arrive and additional funding via East Midlands Councils if additional AD bedspaces in South Derbyshire are commissioned by SERCO.
- 5.8 In addition to this dedicated funding, the Council also has a homelessness reserve. Both AD and H4U schemes will have a direct and indirect effect on homelessness demands within the Council area and therefore the Council has the option to call upon the homelessness reserve to help support the proposed delivery of services to these two new client groups and by extension more broadly to all clients in need of homelessness support.

## **6. Service Demands to Date**

### **Asylum Dispersal**

- 6.1 To date, officer involvement with the Asylum Dispersal scheme has been relatively minimal, only involving monthly meetings with East Midlands Councils to discuss any issues arising from accommodation at the Mercure.

### **Homes for Ukraine**

- 6.2 Officer involvement with the Homes for Ukraine scheme has been considerable, with Council Officers providing the following services:
- Home safety inspections of all proposed sponsors properties prior to Ukrainian guests arrival.
  - Safeguarding checks in relation to the suitability of the proposed sponsor and guest;

- Ad hoc safety and wellbeing visits to guests following their arrival based on mitigating identified significant risks;
- Data processing of all guests admitted to South Derbyshire under the H4U scheme;
- Reactive support to both sponsor and guest in relation to all enquiries about the H4U scheme itself as well as many other enquiries.

6.3 Under the H4U scheme, Ukrainian guests qualify for broadly the same homelessness and social support that is offered to UK citizens. To date, officers in Environmental Services and Housing Services have provided an estimated 700 hours of officer time supporting the H4U scheme.

6.4 A significant proportion of these hours have been provided by an agency member of staff who currently occupies the Business Support Officer post in Environmental Services. This agency member of staff was appointed following a temporary restructure of Environmental Services in September 2020 and which was approved to address the short term increase in demand for services arising from the Covid pandemic. The temporary restructure is being paid for from funding provided by the Derbyshire County Council Director of Public Health. This funding expired at the end of December 2022 and therefore the agency member of staff who has provided the majority of the Councils H4U activity to date was due to leave the Council at the end of December 2022.

6.5 At the end of December 2022, the homelessness spend on providing emergency accommodation for three Ukrainians totalled £5,066.41

6.6 At the end of December, the private sector housing revenue spend on consumables such as providing carbon monoxide monitor and smoke detectors to H4U sponsors was £1,543.

## **7. Predicted Future Demands on Service**

7.1 The cost-of-living crisis is already putting pressure on incomes. Most predictions are that homelessness generally will rise over the course of the next six to twelve months, meaning that there will be additional pressures on existing services without the additional burden of support for H4U and AD schemes.

### **Asylum Dispersal**

7.2 As SERCO identify candidate private sector properties and notify SDDC, officers will be required to provide rapid responses to the proposals.

7.3 Once AD properties are occupied, SDDC officer will need to regularly liaise with the SERCO property manager and ensure that problems which are brought to the attention of the Council are passed on and acted upon by SERCO.

7.4 It is anticipated that individuals who are accommodated in AD private rented properties will require some level of tenancy support, not dissimilar in scale and scope to that already being provided to Ukrainian guests.

7.5 This is a service which the Council does not currently have the capacity to provide.

### **Homes for Ukraine**

- 7.6 It is extremely difficult to map out with any certainty the nature and volume of the demands which will be made on the Council over the course of the next two and a half years of the H4U scheme.
- 7.7 In broad terms the necessary support can be characterised as
- Support for both the sponsor and guest for the duration of the sponsorship, and then
  - Support for the guest during their period of residence in South Derbyshire after the termination of the sponsorship.
- 7.8 The demands of item 1 are relatively well understood by the Council given that this support has already been provided for the last nine months using existing staff resources.
- 7.9 Keeping the sponsor and guest together is the preferred outcome for the H4U scheme. To maximise the chances of the relationship being maintained will require significant proactive and bespoke investment of time by Council officers performing a role which will have strong similarities to the existing Tenancy Sustainment Officer post in Housing Services.
- 7.10 If a guest chooses to exit from a sponsorship arrangement, then the Council's statutory homelessness duties will come into effect. Each guest will be dealt with on the merits of their own case, however in general the Council would seek to support the guest to find suitable private sector accommodation. This aligns with the known preferences and demographic of the current 130 guests in the District and the relative scarcity of appropriate SDDC housing.
- 7.11 This support is likely to require intensive one to one support for guests along with rapid access to funding support for rent deposits, furniture and domestic appliance purchases, translation services and other costs typically associated with homelessness services.
- 7.12 As the project develops it is anticipated that the support provided may need to evolve into areas such as education, skills and training support; healthcare; transport etc. Officers need to have flexibility and relatively speedy access to these funds in order to respond appropriately to emerging client needs.
- 7.13 Currently Ukrainian guests are not eligible to apply for our local council tax reduction scheme. This means that when they are moving into their own rented accommodation and on benefits such as UC or a low income, there is still a 50% charge to pay.
- 7.14 Nine households have been identified so far that this has affected. For the remainder of this financial year the amount chargeable will be c.£5k. This funding gap will be closed in 2023/24. It is proposed to utilise some of the H4U funding to support these households to assist in paying the Council tax charge given that ordinarily they would have been eligible to apply for Council tax reduction.

## **8. Proposed Allocation of Funding**

- 8.1 On the basis of the contents of this report and discussions with front line officers, it is recommended that the available funding described in section 6 be ringfenced for the purposes of providing support for Asylum Dispersal and Homes for Ukraine.
- 8.2 Specifically, it is proposed that the Council:

- 8.3 Create a new temporary Tenancy Sustainment Officer post dedicated to AD and Ukrainian guests.
- 8.4 The costs for a 18 month temporary contract at scale 5 (the current grading for a Tenancy Sustainment Officer) is calculated to be £26,300 × 1.5 = £39,450, plus 30% on costs = £51,285. If it proves necessary to appoint through an agency then the costs can reasonably be expected to be in the region of £80,000 to £90,000 for 18 months.
- 8.5 Approval of the continuation of the temporary restructure of Environmental Services described in the report to F&M Committee on 10 February 2022 until such time as the temporary Tenancy Sustainment Officer position is occupied.
- 8.6 Assuming a worst case scenario that it will take until end March 2023 to occupy the temporary Tenancy Sustainment Officer, the cost of this will be approximately £13,000.
- 8.7 Approval for allocation of funding to cover all the costs of revenue expenditure to date. At the time of the production of this report (late December 2022) these costs are relatively small – namely £1,543 from CEE20 R4000 and £5,066.41 from the homelessness budget, however additional costs are almost certain to be incurred up until the time Council considers this report.
- 8.8 That the remaining funding be apportioned into existing capital funds and made available to officers in Housing Services and Environmental Services to draw down in order to provide the appropriate support for clients described in government guidance on the [Homes for Ukraine](#) scheme and Asylum Dispersal.
- 8.9 Specifically, the proposal 4 relates to the following existing funds:
- Homelessness Prevention Fund:
  - New Homes Furnishing Fund:
  - Morrisons Food Voucher/ Food Parcels:
  - Emergency Accommodation Fund:
- 8.10 The apportionment of the allocation into each fund shall be agreed with the Head of Housing Services.
- 8.11 The financial details of the funding and allocation is summarised in Table 2. It should be noted that some of these costs are best estimates at the time of writing this report and may therefore be subject to change.

**Table 2 - Summary of Funding and Proposed Allocation of Funding**

<b>Funding Name</b>	<b>Total</b>
Homelessness Reserve	£418,800.00
Homes for Ukraine	£188,000.00
Asylum Dispersal	£17,750.00
Sub Total	£624,550.00
<b>Proposed Expenditure</b>	
Temporary Tenancy Sustainment Officer	£51,285.00
Extension of Temporary restructure in Environmental Services	£13,000.00
Local Tax Reduction Scheme	£5,000.00

Repayment of revenue costs to date	£8,152.00
Sub Total	£77,437.00
<b>Balance</b>	<b>£547,113.00</b>

8.12 There is a relatively high level of uncertainty associated with the predicted demands outlined in Section 8 of this report. If the recommendations of this report are approved, it is proposed to review the agreed allocation of the funding within the next 18 months.

## 9. Corporate Implications

9.1 **Employment.** The proposals would directly lead initially to the continued employment of one temporary member of staff in Environmental Services, followed by the employment of one temporary member of staff within the Housing Services.

9.2 **Legal.** There are no new statutory duties imposed on the Council under either H4U or AD. However existing statutory duties, such as under homelessness legislation, apply to guests under both schemes.

9.3 The proposals within this report are intended to mitigate the legal risks.

9.4 **Corporate Plan implications** – The proposals align with the key Corporate Plan theme of ‘Our People’ as well as the key aim of “Supporting and Safeguarding the most Vulnerable”.

9.5 **Risk impact** – The report is not directly linked to any existing corporate or service level risks.

## 10. Community Implications

10.1 **Consultation.** The proposals have been developed on the basis of ongoing discussions with Derbyshire County Council and following discussion with internal frontline staff.

10.2 **Equality and Diversity.** See Equalities Impact Assessment.

10.3 **Social Value Impact.** Beneficial

10.4 **Environmental Sustainability.** Neutral.

## 11. Conclusion

11.1 The report recommends the appropriate use of funding to provide support for the Homes for Ukraine and Asylum Dispersal schemes.

11.2 The proposal to create a temporary Tenancy Sustainment Officer post along with allocation of funding to cover expenses already incurred and anticipated future costs is considered to be appropriate based on anticipated levels of demand.

11.3 The proposed allocation of funding will be reviewed within the next 18 months.

## 12. References

12.1 South Derbyshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020 -2025.