

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive (People)

to

Cabinet

on

19th June 2018

Report prepared by: Olivia Brown, Programme Coordination
Officer

Research, findings and recommendations on current and future provision of the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme (SVPR)

People Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member: Councillor Lesley Salter
A Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of current progress and to recommend that Cabinet endorses the extension of the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (SVPR) Programme by the Council for more families to settle in Southend.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note progress on the current SVPR Programme in Southend as outlined in Section 3 below.
- 2.2 That the Programme is extended in order that more families can settle in Southend, comprising an additional 30 individuals by 2020.
- 2.3 That the Director of Adult Services and Housing, is authorised to:
- Reach agreement with the EELGA, Home Office and other relevant bodies in order to bring 30 additional individuals to Southend, reporting on progress at CMT and Cabinet at regular intervals
 - Reach agreement with local partners in order to identify the local resource to welcome future families.
 - Research and commission effective ways of delivering support services in order to achieve economies of scale.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 7th September 2015, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, made a commitment for 20,000 Syrians in need of protection to be resettled in the UK under the SVPR Programme. It is run in partnership with the UNHCR, the Home Office and DCLG. All local authorities were asked to ascertain if families could be settled within their boundaries and to pledge to support the scheme. As a

result, on 18th September 2015, the Council wrote to the Home Office pledging to support families in Southend under the scheme. A Motion to Council on 5th January 2016 then confirmed Southend's commitment to settle 10-12 individuals. It was noted that the practicalities of supporting the Programme should be reviewed before any further commitment was made.

- 3.2 The first family, comprising 3 individuals arrived in July 2016; the second comprising 6 individuals arrived in September 2016. Appropriate housing was sought in the private rented sector in advance of arrival, and school places for children were identified. Frontline casework support, a criterion for at least the first 12 months of resettlement, was identified through the existing Peabody (formerly Family Mosaic) floating support contract. Regarding accommodation, this was sourced through community support, whereby church groups agreed lower rents for the two families in their properties based upon LHA rates. In sourcing future housing for more families we would take a similar approach and seek to build on these relationships that we have developed. All expenditure for the Programme, excepting a moderate amount of officer time, is met through Home Office funding.
- 3.3 Community involvement has been high, with befriending and welcome events providing a basis for continued relationships between the families and members of the community, and over 500 volunteer hours dedicated to supporting the families on and after arrival. If taken at the National Living Wage this equates to at least £3,750 in contributed hours. It should be noted that without involvement from these groups and especially church groups we would not have been able to bring any families to Southend. In addition, and most importantly, the families have expressed their gratitude in being resettled in Southend.
- 3.4 Significant benefits have been realised through this Programme, including improved health, integration of the children into local education environments and some strong improvement in adult English language skills. However challenges in successfully delivering the Programme remain, and there is a need to achieve economies of scale. Our current difficulty in providing 8 hours of good quality ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) locally and a sustainable casework mechanism to meet the often challenging needs of the families would be resolved by more families arriving and their support funding being pooled to commission services. Furthermore, the on-going support of the Programme will better see through the existing commitment we have made to the two families already settled.
- 3.5 As outlined above, there have been challenging aspects in delivering the SVPR Programme in Southend over the last year. However, despite these challenges, both families have told the SBC lead officer that they are very grateful for the opportunity to live in Southend and for the support they receive from all involved. There are many really positive stories to tell, both at the individual and family level. More broadly this Programme has propelled SBC to work cohesively with community organisations, faith communities and commissioned services towards even greater community cohesion.
- 3.6 It could also be argued that the relatively small commitment we have been able to make so far could be a factor in why integration has, in some ways, proved slow and challenging. Should more Syrian families be brought to the Borough in

the future, it is not unreasonable to expect that the families might thrive through mutual support as they share experiences and knowledge with one another – not so as to create an isolated Syrian community in Southend but so that cultural challenges to integration can be overcome with the support of fellow refugees.

- 3.7 That said, the Programme is perhaps more costly in financial terms than had been anticipated, and whilst full data is not yet available to quantify this, notably in respect of health requirements of families, this will always need to be considered alongside the equally unquantifiable benefits that living in Southend brings to these two families. In other areas in the Eastern region where larger numbers of refugees have been welcomed, economies of scale have been achieved by pooling funding in order to plug any delivery gaps e.g. commissioning bespoke, accessible ESOL provision and casework support. If we resettle more families locally, we will be able to commission a more intensive range of support services with the grants available in order to achieve such economies of scale. Any such commissioned services would be opened up to benefit other communities and utilise the Asset Based Community Development approach that is being embedded in Southend. This would also allow us to have more flexibility in how the families are supported when faced with inevitable financial challenges such as the benefit cap and Universal Credit. Support for partners to ensure that the Programme does not impact them financially e.g. the CCG, would also be recognised.
- 3.8 The proposal to extend the Council's current involvement in the SVPR Programme is made on the basis of the continuing need for a humanitarian response to the ongoing crisis in Syria. The government continues to pursue its commitments under the SVPR Programme and to seek the support of local authorities in this regard. Should the Council extend its offer to an additional 30 individuals it would receive significant additional future funding in order to meet the demands of the Programme. At current levels of government investment this is understood to be £615k over the next 5 years. With the additional investment it is believed that the Programme in Southend would be more sustainable and have greater capacity to meet the support and integration needs of the individuals that relocate here. It is therefore proposed that the Director of Adult Services and Housing is authorised to reach agreement with government bodies as per the above Recommendation 3 with a view to extending the Programme locally.

4. Other Options

- 4.1 That no commitment is given to settle further families within the Borough.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 This is a key national issue that Council needs to address.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

Safe

- Look after and safeguard our children and vulnerable adults

Healthy

- Work with the public and private rented sectors to provide good quality housing
- Improve the life chances of our residents, especially our vulnerable children and adults, by working to reduce inequalities and social deprivation across our communities

Prosperous

- Ensure residents have access to high quality education to enable them to be lifelong learners and have fulfilling employment

Excellent

- Work with and listen to our communities and partners to achieve better outcomes for all

6.2 Financial Implications

The budget for this programme is given to the local authority from Home Office funding, therefore the running of the programme is cost neutral to the council.

Breakdown of funding for families over 5 years

Current provision:

Based on all clients for year 1		
July 2016	September 2016	Total
£	£	£
25,560	51,120	76,680

Agreed numbers	Based on all clients' for years 2-5				
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Total LA payment
	£	£	£	£	£
Arrived clients: 9	45,000	33,300	20,700	9,000	108,000

Projection 1: 30 individuals over 2 financial years

Agreed numbers	Based on all clients for year 1		
	2017/18	2018/19	Total
	£	£	£
Arriving clients: 3 groups of 10 (1 in 17/18, 2 in 18/19)	85,200	170,400	255,600

Agreed numbers	Based on all clients for years 2-5						
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total LA payment
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Arriving clients:10	-	50,000	37,000	23,000	10,000	-	120,000
Arriving clients:20	-	-	100,000	74,000	46,000	20,000	240,000
Total clients:30	-	50,000	137,000	97,000	56,000	20,000	360,000

Projection 2: 50 individuals over 3 financial years

Agreed numbers	Based on all clients for year 1			Total
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/2020	
	£	£	£	£
Arriving clients: 5 groups of 10 (1 in 17/18, 3 in 18/19, 1 in 19/10)	85,200	255,600	85,200	426,000

Agreed numbers	Based on all clients for years 2-5							
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/2023	2023/2024	Total LA payment
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Arriving clients: 10	-	50,000	37,000	23,000	10,000	-	-	120,000
Arriving clients:30	-	-	150,000	111,000	69,000	30,000	-	360,000
Arriving clients: 10	-	-	-	50,000	37,000	23,000	10,000	120,000
Total clients: 50		50,000	187,000	184,000	116,000	53,000	10,000	600,000

Additional Funds made available for Year 1:

Education	£2,250 - £4,500 per child depending on age
ESOL	£850 per adult
CCG Per Capita claim	£2,500
Exceptional cases fund is available a Home Office discretion	

Exceptional costs are also available to the CCG.

The main costs that our current budget covers are interpreter costs (£14,821.49 to date), payments to local schools to aid the integration of children (£9,000) and property set up/ maintenance costs prior to the family's arrival (£7,011.26). A DFG of approximately £5,000 is being approved in order to adapt one property for the needs of

a disabled child. The Exceptional Cases fund will be accessible in order to pay for the 'making good' costs in the future to return the property to its original state.

The cost to staff time is estimated at £8,000 a year (1 level 7 post, 1 day a week).

As can be seen from the tables above, financial support tapers after year one. Due to funding limitations with our current provision, we were unable to procure large scale, targeted support services e.g. bespoke ESOL provision, as this would not be sustainable with just 2 families and no future arrivals planned to bring in more Year 1 funding. Therefore we are currently underspent. This underspend can only be used on families in Year 1 of the programme therefore we will be unable to spend it unless more families arrive. By taking in more families, we will have a larger budget to pool and therefore be able to commission more targeted support services as well as support the programme in future years.

6.3 Legal Implications

n/a

6.4 People Implications

Commitment to on-going internal staff resource allocation.

6.5 Property Implications

The future sustainability of the programme will require sourcing more appropriate properties from the private rented sector, ideally able to support complex family make ups and accepting of housing benefit claimants.

6.6 Consultation

n/a

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

In learning how to do this well as an authority and local partnership, we will be able to support other refugee and asylum seeking communities now and in the future.

6.8 Risk Assessment

A reputational risk exists for SBC with community and faith groups, and the larger SVPR Programme management, if we are not meeting the targets that we should be. There is a risk that with only two families we reduce the capacity for integration of the families and increase isolation.

6.9 Value for Money

Funding for the programme is through the Home Office, therefore there is no cost to the Council in the direct running of the programme. The families are in receipt of benefits, but the aim of the programme is to support future independence. This funding is an investment into setting up the families to live independently and give back to the

community in the future. The community and social value being realised as a result of resettling families in Southend is vast due to volunteer engagement.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

n/a

6.11 Environmental Impact

n/a

7. Background Papers

Background document available

8. Appendices

None