

North Yorkshire County Council

Executive Member for Stronger Communities (Cllr David Chance)

1 April 2022

Homes for Ukraine

1. Purpose of report – to propose that the County Council should engage in the Home for Ukraine scheme working in partnership with the district and borough councils in North Yorkshire.
2. It is proposed that the Executive Member for Stronger Communities should take this decision as it is of such urgency that it is not practicable to refer it to the Executive for determination. This is because the Government's Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme is operating and Ukrainian guests are expected to arrive in North Yorkshire today and on an ongoing basis for some time.
3. The Government's Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme enables households and organisations in the UK to offer to sponsor and host guests (evacuees/refugees) from the war in Ukraine. Offers have to be made online at <https://homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk/> and the Home Office undertakes initial vetting of sponsors and guests before considering whether to accept the sponsorship offer and issue visas to the guests.
4. Unlike other refugee schemes, the Government is assuming that all local authorities will participate, rather than inviting local authorities to participate and enter into a specific agreement with the Home Office.
5. The Government has issued initial guidance for local authorities at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils> which includes roles for local authorities including checking accommodation is suitable, DBS checks on sponsors, making payments to sponsors and an initial payments to guests, and ensuring the provision of wrap around support to evacuees. Local authorities will be given a one-off payment of £10,500 per guest and will be reimbursed for paying sponsors £350 per month per residential address for up to 12 months. There are a significant number of areas where additional Government guidance is to follow. In addition the initial guidance is not specific about whether certain roles are the responsibility of county councils or district and borough councils.
6. Officers of the County Council and district and borough councils are working together to coordinate activities and work together to provide a seamless service to sponsors and guests. From early data provided by Government an initial 200 sponsors (households) in the county have signed up with identified potential guests. The Home Office is processing these offers and is issuing visas on an ongoing basis, with some guests likely to arrive very shortly. Officers are telephoning sponsors as data is received from the Government, checking the data is correct, making arrangements for safeguarding and other checks, and outlining how sponsors and guests will be able to access the support that councils will be providing.
7. There are a number of significant risks, all unquantifiable at this stage, in particular whether the funding will be sufficient for all the costs that that local authorities will incur including provision of wrap around support to the guests; that many of the guests will be traumatised; and that

local authorities will be have responsibility for managing the impacts of any breakdowns of sponsorship arrangements (including any safeguarding issues and providing alternative accommodation). These risks will last for at least three years (the length of the visas to be issued by the Government to the guests) and potentially beyond if guest remain afterwards. The numbers of guests that may arrive in the county is unknown and the Government has said that the numbers of guests who will be welcomed will not be limited.

8. Financial implications – local authorities will receive a fixed amount per guest (£10,500 per person) and will be reimbursed for paying sponsors £350 per month for up to 12 months. Each guest will need to be given a £200 payment in cash issued by the Local Authority upon arrival to be used as interim support for subsistence until benefits are in place; this payment has been factored into the £10,500 per evacuee. It is not clear at this stage which local authorities (upper or lower tier) will receive this payments but officers of the County Council and district/borough council are keen to that the eight councils work together as one on this issue. There is a financial risk as the full scale of the costs and the funding arrangements are still to be worked through and clarified and therefore there is the potential for there to be additional costs to the County Council in the medium term arising from this decision which cannot be quantified at this stage.
9. The government is also providing additional funding to local authorities to provide education services for children. The Department for Education (DfE) will allocate funding on a per pupil basis for the three phases of education at the following annual rates; Early years (ages 2 to 4) - £3,000; Primary (ages 5 -11) - £6,580; Secondary (ages 11-18) - £8,755.
10. Alternatives considered – the only alternative would be to refuse to participate and this would leave local sponsors and guests without support and the County Council and district and borough councils subject to significant criticism from Government and local people.
11. Recommendations:
 - That the County Council engages in the Home for Ukraine scheme in partnership with district and borough councils and within the guidance issued from time to time by the Government.
 - That the Corporate Director Strategic Resources has delegated authority to accept the funding from the Government.
 - That the Corporate Director Strategic Resources and Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services have delegated authority to enter into any agreements with the Government, partners and others that are necessary regarding the Home for Ukraine scheme.

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