

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Report Title: Asylum Seeker Support from Warwickshire County Council

Name of Committee: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 5 February 2024

Report Director: Chief Officer - Communities and Homes

Portfolio: Communities, Homes, Digital and Communications

Ward Relevance: N/A

Prior Consultation: Portfolio Holder and opposition group representatives

Contact Officer: Mary Jane Gunn (Communities & Projects Manager) maryjane.gunn@rugby.gov.uk

Public or Private: Public

Report Subject to Call-In: Yes

Report En-Bloc: No

Forward Plan: Yes

Corporate Priorities: This report relates to the following priority(ies):
 Rugby is an environmentally sustainable place, where we work together to reduce and mitigate the effects of climate change. (C)
 Rugby has a diverse and resilient economy that benefits and enables opportunities for all residents. (E)
 Residents live healthy, independent lives, with the most vulnerable protected. (HC)
 Rugby Borough Council is a responsible, effective and efficient organisation. (O)
[Corporate Strategy 2021-2024](#)
 This report does not specifically relate to any Council priorities but

(C) Climate
(E) Economy
(HC) Health and Communities
(O) Organisation

Summary: The report sets out proposals to utilise a Home Office funding allocation of £192,750 received by the council for in respect of the support of asylum seekers living in contingency accommodation in the borough as at 1 April 2023.

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| Financial Implications: | These are outlined in section 5.0 of the report. |
| Risk Management/Health and Safety Implications: | <p>The councils have worked closely together to support asylum seekers in the borough. However, Warwickshire County Council has not received any of this funding allocation as it has been paid, in full to the borough.</p> <p>There is a risk that without receiving any of the funding, they may have to withdraw anything over and above honouring their statutory duties. This is likely to have a detrimental impact on the council, who will potentially have to intervene and there are obvious potential impacts on the well-being of the cohort.</p> |
| Environmental Implications: | There are no identified environmental implications |
| Legal Implications: | <p>The Council has a wide power within section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000. This is known as the “wellbeing power” and seeks to promote or improve the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of the Council’s area. This includes the power to provide financial assistance to achieve this purpose.</p> <p>In addition to the “wellbeing power” the council is also able to utilise the General Power of Competence under the Localism Act 2011. This represents a more recent statutory power and further strengthens the ability of the Council to provide financial assistance as set out within this report.</p> |
| Equality and Diversity: | An equality impact assessment has been completed and forms appendix A to this report |
| Options: | <p>1) To pay Warwickshire County Council half of the grant received:</p> <p>This is in recognition of the collaborative work that has taken place at both a county and a borough level to support a very vulnerable cohort within the community. The county has incurred substantial costs in delivering support services to the cohort (more detail is covered in section 4.0 of the report).</p> <p>2) For the borough council to retain the grant in full:</p> |

There are risks associated with this as Warwickshire County Council could legitimately withdraw the non-statutory support that they are currently providing for the well being of this vulnerable cohort.

The impact of this would be an expectation that the borough council would have to intervene, bringing with this both operational and reputational risks.

Such a decision would also likely undermine the successful collaborative relationship of the two organisations going forward.

Recommendation:

IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT:

- 1) a supplementary General Fund revenue budget of £96,375 be established to enable the transfer of funding to Warwickshire County Council;
- 2) the remaining funding be held as a reserve to support any financial pressures arising from increased homelessness within the cohort during 2024/25;
- 3) delegated authority be given the Chief Officer for Communities and Homes to utilise this funding, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Homes, Digital and Communication; and
- 4) any unutilised funding, as at 31 March 2025, be returned to balances.

Reasons for Recommendation:

This is an opportunity to ensure that Warwickshire County Council benefits from a proportion of the grant, to cover some of the costs that they have incurred in supporting this cohort and reflects the value attached to partnership working.

Cabinet - 5 February 2024

Asylum Seeker Support from Warwickshire County Council

Public Report of the Chief Officer - Communities and Homes

Recommendation

IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT:

- 1) A supplementary General Fund revenue budget of £96,375 be established to enable the transfer of funding to Warwickshire County Council
- 2) The remaining funding be held as a reserve to support any financial pressures arising from increased homelessness within the cohort during 2024/25.
- 3) Delegated authority be given the Chief Officer for Communities and Homes to utilise this funding, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Homes, Digital and Communication
- 4) Any unutilised funding, as at 31 March 2025, be returned to balances

1.0 Executive Summary

Both the borough council and Warwickshire County Council have provided support to the asylum seeker cohort resident in contingency accommodation in the borough during 2023/24.

This report sets out a proposal to share with Warwickshire County Council an allocation of £192,750 un-ringfenced funding received by the borough council from the Home Office during 2023/24 in respect of Asylum Seekers living in contingency accommodation within the borough. The funding was granted in recognition of the impact on local services due to supporting asylum seekers.

The allocation was calculated based on the number of asylum seekers resident in contingency accommodation in the borough as at 1 April 2023.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 During the 2023/24 financial year, the council received a funding allocation from the Home Office. This one-off un-ringfenced funding was allocated on the basis of £750 for each asylum seeker resident in contingency accommodation in the borough as at 1 April 2023. The total funding allocation was £192,750.

- 2.2 The funding is intended to address concerns raised by local authorities in relation to pressures on local services associated with supporting asylum seekers.
- 2.3 Whilst the funding was paid directly by the Home Office to the borough council, Warwickshire County Council have also had a significant role to play in supporting our guests.

3.0 The different models of asylum seeker accommodation provided by the Home Office

- 3.1 Contingency accommodation is the initial accommodation provided to asylum seekers if they are destitute, until their application for longer term accommodation and subsistence is decided. The provision of such accommodation forms part of the statutory duty of the Home Office to provide accommodation and subsistence of all destitute asylum seekers whilst their asylum claims are being decided.
- 3.2 If asylum support is granted then the household will be eligible for dispersed accommodation until a final decision is made on their asylum claim. This tends to be smaller properties, dispersed in communities, again procured by the Home Office's appointed contractors – locally this is Serco.
- 3.3 Since April 2022, all local authorities are now defined as dispersal areas. As part of this they work in regional partnerships to agree how their regional allocation of dispersal numbers can be allocated. The resulting local authority funding for each bedspace arising in 2023/24 is to be £3,500. As yet, there has been no confirmed financial allocation for Rugby in respect of this. It is anticipated that funding will be confirmed early in 2024/25.

4.0 Support to asylum seekers living in contingency accommodation

- 4.1 In addition to the day-to-day operational impact of such accommodation being in the borough, the main role of the borough council has been to leading and co-ordinating the multi-agency response to ensure the health, wellbeing and safety of our guests. This has included working closely with public health, the police and Serco, the contractor appointed by the Home Office to manage contingency accommodation in the borough.
- 4.2 However, the practical day-to-day support for guests has been co-ordinated by the Warwickshire County Council's (WCC) Youth and Targeted Support Team' migration support project. They have:
- employed workers to work within the hotels to provide advice and support to guests to ensure that they have access to education, health and social care;
 - directly commissioned support from the Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre to support caseworker arrangements;
 - been working with local charities to support access to clothing and school uniforms.

4.4 At the time of writing, WCC are working closely with EQUIP to identify further proposals for the support of this cohort and hope to have a model in place for 1 April 2024.

5.0 Financial proposal

5.1 In recognition of the collaborative working of both the Council and WCC, and the costs incurred by the county, for which no recompense has been made via the allocated funding, it is proposed that the 2023/24 financial allocation of £192,750 be split 50/50 between both councils.

5.2 This is in recognition of the cost and resource implications impacting on both organisations in support of the cohort living in contingency accommodation.

5.3 As the funding is not ringfenced, it is proposed that the borough allocation will be used to create a reserve to offset the potential costs (for example translation support and temporary accommodation) associated with households presenting as homeless during 2024/25.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Both the borough and WCC have worked collaboratively, and continue to do so, to support the asylum seeker community living in contingency accommodation in the borough.

6.2 It just happens that the resulting funding allocation was paid in full to the borough council.

6.3 Had the funding been paid exclusively to WCC, the council would have expected them to have made a similar decision to split the funding with the borough council.

Name of Meeting: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 5 February 2024

Subject Matter: Asylum Seeker Support from Warwickshire County Council

Originating Department: Communities and Homes

DO ANY BACKGROUND PAPERS APPLY YES NO

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

| Doc No | Title of Document and Hyperlink |
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The background papers relating to reports on planning applications and which are open to public inspection under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972, consist of the planning applications, referred to in the reports, and all written responses to consultations made by the Local Planning Authority, in connection with those applications.

Exempt information is contained in the following documents:

| Doc No | Relevant Paragraph of Schedule 12A |
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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

Context

1. The Public Sector Equality Duty as set out under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires Rugby Borough Council when making decisions to have due regard to the following:
 - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
 - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
 - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
2. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage/civil partnership
 - pregnancy/maternity
 - race
 - religion/belief
 - sex/gender
 - sexual orientation
3. In addition to the above-protected characteristics, you should consider the crosscutting elements of the proposed policy, such as impact on social inequalities and impact on carers who look after older people or people with disabilities as part of this assessment.
4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) document is a tool that enables RBC to test and analyse the nature and impact of what it is currently doing or is planning to do in the future. It can be used flexibly for reviewing existing arrangements but in particular should enable identification where further consultation, engagement and data is required.
5. The questions will enable you to record your findings.
6. Where the EqIA relates to a continuing project, it must be reviewed and updated at each stage of the decision.
7. Once completed and signed off the EqIA will be published online.
8. An EqIA must accompany all **Key Decisions** and **Cabinet Reports**.
9. For further information, refer to the EqIA guidance for staff.
10. For advice and support, contact:

Corporate Equality & Diversity Team

Equality Impact Assessment

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| Service Area | Communities & Homes |
| Policy/Service being assessed | Asylum Seeker support from Warwickshire County Council |
| Is this a new or existing policy/service? If existing policy/service, please state date of last assessment | New |
| EqlA Review team – List of members | Michelle Dickson Mary Jane Gunn |
| Date of this assessment | 07 December 2023 |
| Signature of responsible officer (to be signed after the EqlA has been completed) |  |

A copy of this Equality Impact Assessment report, including relevant data and information to be forwarded to the Corporate Equality & Diversity Team.

Details of Strategy/ Service/ Policy to be analysed

| <u>Stage 1 – Scoping and Defining</u> | |
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| (1) Describe the main aims, objectives, and purpose of the Strategy/Service/Policy (or decision)? | Both Rugby Borough Council and Warwickshire County Council have provided support to the asylum seeker cohort resident in contingency accommodation in 2023/24. It is proposed that the borough share with Warwickshire County Council an allocation of £192,750 un-ring-fenced funding received by the borough from the Home Office during 2023/24 in respect of asylum seekers living in contingency accommodation within the borough. |
| (2) How does it fit with Rugby Borough Council's Corporate priorities and your service area priorities? | The support of asylum seekers in contingency accommodation relates to the following corporate priority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residents live healthy, independent lives with the most vulnerable protected. |
| (3) What are the expected outcomes you are hoping to achieve? | The appropriate utilisation of a Home Office funding allocation of £192,750 received by the council in respect of asylum seekers living in contingency accommodation in the borough in 2023/24. |
| (4) Does or will the policy or decision affect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers • Employees • Wider community or groups | This policy/decision affects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asylum seekers living in contingency accommodation and funds appropriate support from the borough and Warwickshire County Council - Rugby residents who benefit from appropriate support being in place for asylum seekers in contingency accommodation. - Warwickshire County Council |
| <u>Stage 2 - Information Gathering</u> | |
| (1) What does the information tell you about those groups identified? | The population most affected are asylum seekers living in contingency accommodation and Warwickshire County Council. |

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| <p>(2) Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the strategy/ service/policy you want to implement? If yes, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?</p> | <p>We have consulted with Warwickshire County Council on the correct apportionment of the Home Office grant to reflect the costs and resource requirements of both Warwickshire County Council and the borough.</p> | | |
| <p>(3) If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary.</p> | <p>The funding provided to the borough is on the basis of a set amount for each asylum seeker in contingency accommodation in the borough on 1 April 2023. The funding formula is defined by the Home Office.</p> | | |
| <p><u>Stage 3 – Analysis of impact</u></p> | | | |
| <p><u>(1) Protected Characteristics</u> From your data and consultations is there any positive, adverse, or negative impact identified for any particular group, which could amount to discrimination? If yes, identify the groups and how they are affected.</p> | <p>RACE No adverse impact</p> | <p>DISABILITY No adverse impact.</p> | <p>GENDER No adverse impact</p> |
| | <p>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP No adverse impact</p> | <p>AGE No adverse impact.</p> | <p>GENDER REASSIGNMENT No adverse impact</p> |
| | <p>RELIGION/BELIEF No adverse impact</p> | <p>PREGNANCY MATERNITY No adverse impact</p> | <p>SEXUAL ORIENTATION No adverse impact</p> |

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| <p><u>(2) Cross cutting themes</u> (a) Are your proposals likely to impact on social inequalities e.g., child poverty, geographically disadvantaged communities? If yes, please explain how?</p> <p>(b) Are your proposals likely to impact on a carer who looks after older people or people with disabilities? If yes, please explain how?</p> | <p>Our proposals assist the borough, and Warwickshire County Council in working collaboratively to support the asylum seeker community living in contingency accommodation in the borough.</p> |
| <p>(3) If there is an adverse impact, can this be justified?</p> | <p>No adverse impacts have been identified.</p> |
| <p>(4) What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact? (This should form part of your action plan under Stage 4.)</p> | <p>N/A</p> |
| <p>(5) How does the strategy/service/policy contribute to the promotion of equality? If not, what can be done?</p> | <p>This</p> |
| <p>(6) How does the strategy/service/policy promote good relations between groups? If not, what can be done?</p> | <p>This proposal ensures that appropriate support is provided to the asylum seeker cohort living in contingency accommodation within the borough.</p> |
| <p>(7) Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service? If yes, how can they be overcome?</p> | <p>N/A</p> |

| <u>Stage 4 – Action Planning, Review & Monitoring</u> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| <p>If No Further Action is required, then go to – Review & Monitoring</p> <p>(1) Action Planning – Specify any changes or improvements that can be made to the service or policy to mitigate or eradicate negative or adverse impact on specific groups, including resource implications.</p> | <p>No further action is required.</p> <p>EqlA Action Plan</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="875 459 2116 692"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="875 459 1120 539">Action</th> <th data-bbox="1120 459 1366 539">Lead Officer</th> <th data-bbox="1366 459 1615 539">Date for completion</th> <th data-bbox="1615 459 1865 539">Resource requirements</th> <th data-bbox="1865 459 2116 539">Comments</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="875 539 1120 576"></td> <td data-bbox="1120 539 1366 576"></td> <td data-bbox="1366 539 1615 576"></td> <td data-bbox="1615 539 1865 576"></td> <td data-bbox="1865 539 2116 576"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="875 576 1120 612"></td> <td data-bbox="1120 576 1366 612"></td> <td data-bbox="1366 576 1615 612"></td> <td data-bbox="1615 576 1865 612"></td> <td data-bbox="1865 576 2116 612"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="875 612 1120 649"></td> <td data-bbox="1120 612 1366 649"></td> <td data-bbox="1366 612 1615 649"></td> <td data-bbox="1615 612 1865 649"></td> <td data-bbox="1865 612 2116 649"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="875 649 1120 692"></td> <td data-bbox="1120 649 1366 692"></td> <td data-bbox="1366 649 1615 692"></td> <td data-bbox="1615 649 1865 692"></td> <td data-bbox="1865 649 2116 692"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | | | | | Action | Lead Officer | Date for completion | Resource requirements | Comments | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| <p>(2) Review and Monitoring State how and when you will monitor policy and Action Plan</p> | <p>This EQIA will be reviewed as required.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Please annotate your policy with the following statement:

An Equality Impact Assessment on this policy was undertaken on 7 December 2023 and will be reviewed if required.