

From: Zena Cooke, Corporate Director for Finance

To: Roger Gough, Leader of the Council

Subject: Urgent Decision implementation of Homes for Ukraine Scheme in Kent

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has seen the largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War with approximately 4 million Ukrainian refugees leaving Ukraine to neighbouring countries to flee the conflict. The UK Government has positively responded with the development of two key pathways to enable Ukrainian refugees to enter the UK. The two key schemes which are operating are the 'Extended Family Scheme', where family members can come to the UK where they have existing family in the UK, and the 'Homes for Ukraine Scheme' which is where Ukrainian Refugees are sponsored to come to the UK by a host family or individual. Initially, individual members of the public can sponsor a guest from Ukraine who meet the eligibility criteria for this scheme. In later phases, organisations and community groups will be able to sponsor multiple guests.

As part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the government requires local government to undertake several checks and provide support to both the sponsor and Ukrainian guests. In two tier areas responsibilities fall to both County and District councils and KCC is working closely with its partners to ensure a coordinated response is provided. In addition, several KCC services, in particular Children's and Adult Social Care have a statutory obligation to provide the necessary support. The government is funding £10,500 per guest and an ongoing monthly "thank you" payment of £350 to sponsors to support the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. Additional funding is also being made available in respect of education services and may also be made available to cover exceptional costs which are outside of the funding allowance but are necessary to deliver the scheme and to support both the Sponsors and Ukrainians coming into the UK under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

This report sets out the considerations and the urgent decision which is required to implement the Homes for Ukraine Scheme in Kent.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that the Leader agrees to:

1. accept the funding from Government required to deliver the 'Homes for Ukraine Scheme' in Kent;
2. approve the establishment of the infrastructure and other necessary arrangements required to support the implementation of the scheme;
3. authorise the Corporate Director for Finance to allocate funding in accordance with the Homes for Ukraine Scheme government guidance and implement the payments as set out by the scheme to enable delivery in Kent in accordance with the principles set out in the decision report and the proposed Funding Framework;
4. delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Finance, after consultation with the Leader to update, review and amend the distribution of funding to deliver the Homes for Ukraine Programme and/or in response to changing need;
5. delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Finance, after consultation with the Leader, to accept additional subsequent funding made available by Government where it is designed to support this and closely related Schemes, for deployment in accordance with relevant funding frameworks; and
6. delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Finance to take other appropriate actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements as required to implement this decision.

1. Introduction

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has seen the largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War with approximately 4 million Ukrainian refugees leaving Ukraine to neighbouring countries to flee the conflict. The UK Government has positively responded with the development of two key pathways to enable refugees to enter the UK.

The two key schemes which are operating are the 'Extended Family Scheme', where family members can come to the UK where they have existing family in the UK, and the 'Homes for Ukraine Scheme' which is where Ukrainian Refugees are sponsored to come to the UK by a host family or individual. Initially, individual members of the public can sponsor a guest from Ukraine who meet the eligibility criteria for this scheme. In later phases, organisations and community groups will be able to sponsor multiple guests.

Under the scheme, the sponsor receives a £350 per month 'Thank You' payment provided that they meet the scheme requirements. Numbers are uncapped and restricted only by the number of eligible sponsors that come forward. Those accessing the scheme will be able to live and work in the UK for up to three years and access benefits, healthcare, employment, and other support. Those arriving need to meet standard security checks prior to being issued with a visa.

2. Requirement of Local Government as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme

2.1. The government have issued guidance which sets out the following roles for Councils:

- i. The establishment of welcome point arrangements to support any short-term arrival needs at key arrival points in the UK. In the case of Kent consideration is needed for the portal points at both Dover and Folkestone.
- ii. Receipt and onward sharing of data.
- iii. Accommodation, DBS, Safeguarding and Welfare Checks.
- iv. £200 payment for each guest.
- v. Provision of school places.
- vi. Service referrals to specialist services.
- vii. Support to access local Job Centre Plus appointments for benefit assessments and job-seeking.
- viii. Homelessness support should the sponsor/guest relationship break down.
- ix. Supporting community integration.
- x. Administering 'Thank you' payments to sponsorships.

2.2 Detailed government guidance is expected and KCC is working closely with districts and other partners to ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place. For KCC, there are a number of services which will have a key role to play in the delivery of the scheme in relation to the safeguarding checks and providing access and support to key services such as education provision and countywide infrastructure which is necessary to support the delivery of the scheme.

3. Financial Implications

3.1. The full extent of the financial implications is currently being established, however Under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the government has confirmed it will provide grant funding to councils at a rate of £10,500 per guest, to enable councils to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities. The £10,500 for each Ukrainian refugee is for the first year at this stage with future years to be reviewed. The £10,500 includes the initial £200 payment which is payable to each guest accessing the scheme. This funding will be un-ringfenced, but with several conditions attached.

3.2. Councils have been asked to administer 'Thank You' payments of £350 per sponsoring household per month. Additional funding will be allocated for these payments, but councils will be expected to absorb administration costs.

3.3. The government is also providing additional funding to councils to provide education services for children from families arriving from Ukraine under this scheme. 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

3.4 These tariffs include support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

3.5 The allocation and administration of the education funding will be undertaken in consultation with the Director of Education and the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.

3.6 Collaboration with key partners such as District and Borough Councils will ensure funding is allocated equitably across organisations as required and will support emerging approaches that support the Council to respond as the Scheme develops and to ensure the partner best placed to support the different elements of the scheme, is able to put appropriate measures in place, this may be at a district, borough or at a county level, should countywide infrastructure or services be required an considered most efficient and effective.

3.7 The proportion of guests and sponsors is not known at this stage and the detail of scheme and related Government guidance is still emerging. There is a risk that the initial grant funding (the £10,500 per person and the education funding) will prove to be inadequate. Should this be the case KCC will seek to recover all additional costs from Government.

3.8 The use of any grant funding will be monitored closely, not only to provide update reports to Cabinet and the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee but also to flex the response as the scheme develops and need and demand changes across the County.

4. The Funding Framework

4.1. A funding framework will be developed to ensure a consistent process for decision-making that aligns with the requirements of the Homes for Ukraine grant funding and the expectations Government has of councils having regard to KCC's statutory duties. The Framework will be reviewed and updated as required, in consultation with the Leader, subject to changes in the relevant government guidance relating to administration and management of the scheme.

4.2. The key elements of the framework are set out below:

- All spend should align with the conditions of the grant funding and / or the delivery of KCC's statutory responsibilities as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.
- A consistent decision-making process in line with the delegated authority will be applied to all spend with grant approval by the Corporate Director for Finance
- Any organisation in receipt of the grant will be required to regularly report on the use of the funding and return any unspent funding if requested by KCC.
- A written summary of all funded activities will be recorded to provide an auditable process.

- The Director of Infrastructure or delegated officer will chair the monitoring group to be established called the Homes for Ukraine Monitoring Group (HfUMG) and be responsible for ensuring the framework is applied consistently. The HfUMG will also take account of the proposals made for funding by the working group representing district or borough councils.
- The Corporate Director for Finance will deploy the funding in a flexible way under officer delegation according to need subject to compliance with the Funding Framework.
- The spend will be regularly report to Cabinet and the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.

5. Governance and Legal Implications

- 5.1. The Council owes a number of existing legal duties to arriving adults and children irrespective of their country of origin or where they may eventually reside within the County. These duties exist pursuant to a number of pieces of legislation that apply to Children and Adults. Legal advice will be sought as the Funding Framework is developed further and implemented.
- 5.2. It is important to note that the possibility of increasing pressure on existing service delivery. This in turn may present challenges for KCC in its ability to discharge its legal duties to existing and new service users. This will be kept under review through the mechanisms set out in this report.
- 5.3. The intention is to use existing contracting and commissioning processes where possible or there may be a need to put new contractual arrangements in place. Due to the urgency and fast-moving nature of the delivery of the scheme it may be necessary to make use of appropriate procurement and contractual mechanisms that enable emergency contracting.
- 5.4. The delegations put in place by the key decision will confirm ongoing management of grant funding and spend will be vested in the Corporate Director for Finance, in accordance with the agreed funding framework. This delegation includes reviewing and where necessary revising the spend arrangements after consultation with the Leader.
- 5.5. All spend will be monitored as part of compliance checks to ensure adherence to the funding framework associated with the allocation of any funding.
- 5.6. A key decision is required to enable the implementation of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme in Kent and to ensure that the Council can meet its statutory duties. The decision asks the Leader to approve the approach set out in the report and delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Finance to implement the proposed arrangements.
- 5.7. A Homes for Ukraine Monitoring Group (HfUMG) will be established and meet regularly to oversee and apply the funding framework to ensure consistency of all spend.

5.8. Internal and External contracts may need to be put in place along with the utilisation of existing contracts. These will be completed in consultation with Strategic Commisisioning and the Head of Law.

5.9. Relevant due diligence will be undertaken at project level including in relation to Data Management and Equalities Impacts. Completion of these where appropriate will be monitored by the HfUMG.

5.10. An offer will be made to provide an update to the Scrutiny Committee in 3 months on the use of funding.

6. Reason for Urgency

6.1. The Homes for Ukraine scheme has been launched by the government following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent humanitarian crisis as those in Ukraine seek to flee the conflict. Initial guidance was issued on the 18th March 2022 setting out the Government's intention and the expected role of Councils, this is continuing to be developed. An urgent decision is needed to enable the Council to implement the scheme and ensure that the appropriate infrastructure is in place to support the delivery of the Programme in the County. Compliance with the standard Executive Decision timeframes would significantly delay the delivery of vital support to those who are coming to the UK in Kent or are sponsors as part of the Homes for Ukraine national programme.

7. Equality Implications

7.1. An equality impact screening assessment has been undertaken.

8. Other Corporate Implications

8.1. Given the need to implement quickly, the Council will operate within existing data sharing protocols whilst in parallel developing data sharing arrangements.

9. Conclusions

9.1. The Homes to Ukraine scheme sets out the expectations of local Councils and whilst government guidance is being finalised, the Council must be able to respond to implement the scheme at a local level with partners. The scale of funding and the level of Council activity involved is such that a Key Decision is required. The speed of implementation required, and dynamic nature of the scheme is such that the key decision must allow for appropriate preparations via the establishment of a suitable framework that will ensure that the Council response can commence at speed.

9.2. Funding will be used in accordance with the funding framework as set out in this report and the Council will apply appropriate legal mechanisms where necessary, in relation to the implemenation of the Homes for Ukraine

Scheme. The Council will record, monitor and report on the deployment of any grant or other funding, in accordance with its formal budget monitoring and reporting arrangements.

10. Recommendation(s)

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6. delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Finance to take other appropriate actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements as required to implement this decision.

11. Background documents

11.1. Equalities Impact Assessment

12. Contact details

Report Author

Rebecca Spore,
Director of Infrastructure
rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk
03000 416716

Relevant Director

Zena Cooke,
Corporate Director for Finance
Zena.cooke@kent.gov.uk
03000 419205