

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – URGENT RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

**Roger Gough
Leader of The Council**

DECISION NO:

22/00037

For publication**Key decision: YES**

The decision will:

- a. result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or*
- b. be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions.*

Subject: Homes for Ukraine Scheme in Kent**Decision:**

As Leader of the Council, I agree 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.

Reason(s) for decision:

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(s) 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 a number of checks and provide support to both the sponsor and Ukrainian guests. In two tier areas responsibilities fall to both County and District councils and Kent County Council (KCC) is working closely with its partners to ensure a coordinated response is provided. In addition, a number of KCC services in particular Children's and Adult Social Care, have a statutory obligation to provide 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 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 support both the Sponsors and Ukrainians coming into the UK under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

Financial Implications:

Under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, the government has confirmed it will provide funding at a rate of £10,500 per guest to Councils to enable them to provide support to refugee families, to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities. The £10,500 funding for supporting Ukrainian nationals is for the first year at this stage with future years to be reviewed. The £10,500 includes the initial £200 payment per guest which is payable to those accessing the scheme. This funding will be un-ringfenced, but with a number of conditions attached.

Councils are being 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.

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

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

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 which enable the Council to respond as the Scheme develops, and the partner best placed to support the different elements of the scheme is able to put the appropriate measures in place. This may be at a District/ Borough level or at a county level should Countywide infrastructure or services be required and considered most efficient and effective. 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 will prove to be inadequate, should this be the case, KCC will seek to recover all additional costs from Central Government.

Legal Implications:

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.

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.

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.

Reason for Urgency:

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. 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 Ukrainian refugees coming to the UK to hosts in Kent, or those who are sponsors as part of the Homes for Ukraine National Programme.

Member and other consultation:

No Cabinet Committee consultation possible due to urgency process.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, in addition to agreeing that the decision could not be reasonably deferred provided the following comments:

Mr Booth was supportive of the decision.

The Group Spokespeople of the Scrutiny Committee providing the following comments:

Mr Stepto was supportive of the decision.

Dr Sullivan commented as follows:

“I want to thank the officers for providing me with a briefing on this matter. I want to thank families in the Kent for volunteering to be sponsors for families and people fleeing Ukraine.

I do however wish to raise the following points of concern:

- I have concern for the risk that may occur, in some instances, of exploitation of people fleeing conflict, in particular, the vulnerable nature of the refugee cohort mainly being women and children cannot be understated. Based on the sponsorship-family matching program it is likely the family will be separated from friends and family and could be and feel very isolated. In relation to this matter, further work should be done to ensure all the people are safe and protected, prior to arrival, with more power to Councils to refuse potential sponsors if there are safeguarding and welfare concerns.
- I have some concerns about the planning capacity of this Council, based on the lack of knowledge or communication from Government of when and how many refugees will arrive in Kent, making it difficult to increase services and provision where needed, this extends to schools

also and early years provision. Strong communication back to Government needs to be made here to assist Councils with planning and executing support arrangements.

- I have great concerns that money allocated by Government will not fully cover the expense of the additional support required to support these families.
- I am also concerned about potential break-down in Sponsorships and families and where that leaves both the sponsor and the family and the Council's duties."

The Chair and Spokespeople of the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee provided the following comments:

See above for Spokespeople comments (Mr Stepto and Dr Sullivan)

No other comments received.

Any alternatives considered:

Alternatives could have included passporting the grant funding and data to districts with KCC only keeping the funding related to education and other KCC related services. This option was discounted as a multiagency coordinated consistent response is needed across the County, which pulls on the strengths across partners.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

N/A



5 April

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signed

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date