

Record of decision taken under delegated powers by a council officer



Title:	Community sponsorship of a refugee family
Divisions Affected:	Mole Valley
Key Decision:	No
Reason Key:	To delegate all non-executive decisions (as far as the law allows) to the relevant proper officer in consultation with the relevant chairman or member nominated by the chairman.
Decision taken under delegation by virtue of:	Council report, constitutional changes, 16 March 2021

Summary

The Home Office has introduced a Community Sponsorship Scheme whereby local community groups can take responsibility to welcome and support refugee families from conflict-ridden regions directly into their communities. This complements resettlement work that has been undertaken by local authorities as part of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). Surrey County Council and Surrey's Districts and Boroughs have been active participants in the VPR Scheme since 2015 and over 100 families have been resettled in Surrey. The Community Sponsorship Scheme was paused by the Home Office during the pandemic and is now being reintroduced.

A faith group has identified a house to accommodate a refugee family in Mole Valley and has prepared an application to the Home Office for Community Sponsorship. The group is seeking the Council's consent to be a Community Sponsor in line with Home Office requirements. Surrey County Council agreed on 22 January 2019 to encourage and enable Community Sponsorship and gave consent to a previous prospective Community Sponsor in Mole Valley.

Decision made

Decision made:

It was AGREED that:

1. The Executive Director for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning gives consent to a prospective Community Sponsor in Mole Valley subject to them meeting the Home Office criteria for that consent.

Reasons for Decision:

The resettlement of a refugee household in Mole Valley adds to the diversity of the area and the household will have the opportunity in the long term to contribute to the local economy

through employment and voluntary work. This results in a vibrant local economy with thriving towns and villages.

The Community Sponsorship Scheme present opportunities to promote community spirit, to encourage individuals and families to welcome and support refugee households and to be more resilient in times of need.

Decision taken by:	Rachael Wardell
Decision taken on:	12 May 2021
To be implemented on:	17 May 2021

Alternative options considered

No other options considered – as this has worked elsewhere

Summary of any financial implications

Financial assistance is provided in the form of grant assistance by the Home Office. Effectively Community Sponsorship is cost neutral and the County Council bears no direct cost for the Scheme.

Although significant progress has been made over the last twelve months to improve the Council's financial position, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2021/22 remains uncertain. The public health crisis has resulted in increased costs which may not be fully funded. With uncertainty about the ongoing impact of this and no clarity on the extent to which both central and local funding sources might be affected in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term. The Section 151 Officer supports the proposal to give consent to this approach.

There are no short or medium-term financial implications to SCC from the Community Sponsorship scheme, as grant funding will be received in the first year for school places. There is also potential for Home Office support from years two to five that will alleviate any short to medium term funding pressures on Surrey County Council (SCC). Surrey County Council would be able to claim for exceptional social care costs if not already covered by health, education or welfare funding.

Declarations of conflicts of interest

The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	There are no implications for Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children.

	Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	The Home Office undertakes strenuous security and safeguarding checks on households before they are put forward for resettlement. In addition, the prospective Community Sponsor has confirmed the suitability of their Safeguarding Policy with lead officers at Surrey's Safeguarding Boards for both Children and Adults.	
	Environmental sustainability	There are no implications for environmental sustainability.	
	Public Health	There are no implications for public health.	

Consultation/Process Followed

There has been no external public consultation on this report

The Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning and the Surrey County Councillor for Dorking Rural were internally consulted on the recommendation of this report.

This recommendation has been externally consulted with the Mole Valley District Council Strategic Housing Manger. The Leader, Chief Executive, Lead Cabinet Member at Mole Valley District Council were consulted and agreed to Mole Valley District Council's consent.

Background Documents

Exempt:

None