



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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Name and date of Committee	Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Thursday 16th September 2021
Report Number	Agenda Item 8
Subject	Afghan Resettlement Programme
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Merilyn Davies, Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing, Group Manager Resident Services / Mandy Fathers, Business Manager - Operations
Summary/Purpose	Programme Update September 2021 To provide an update report on the preparations for the arrival of refugees from Afghanistan.
	Update Report produced by Paula Massey, Enabling Manager and Coordinator for Refugee Programmes Any questions can be emailed to paula.massey@publicagroup.uk
Recommendation/s	That the report is noted.
Corporate priorities	Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance: Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council Strong Local Communities: Supporting and building prosperous and inclusive local communities
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/Consultation	No

Update Report

Afghanistan Resettlement Programme – Information Update as of 06 September 2021

Since the initial update 30 June 2021 West Oxfordshire District Council are now actively working to support families.

The National Picture

2 separate Afghan Resettlement Programmes.

Afghan Locally Employed Staff

Supporting families who have assisted the British Forces

3,300

Funding package agreed by the Home Office to cover 12 months support

Broader Afghan Resettlement

Refugees fleeing Afghanistan

20,000 over 5 years

5,000 this year

Financial package still to be agreed

6th September, the Prime Minister gave a statement to Parliament on the situation in Afghanistan confirming that armed forces, diplomats and civil servants in this country helped evacuate 15,000 people to safety in the UK and also helped 36 other countries airlift their own nationals.

The Prime Minister confirmed that the UK is formally launching a separate resettlement programme, providing a safe and legal route for up to 20,000 Afghans in the region over the coming years, with 5,000 in the first year.

He added that the government will shortly be writing to councils and the Devolved Administrations with details on funding for extra school places and long-term accommodation across the UK.

Funding for Afghan Locally Employed Staff

- Funding is for 12 months.
- Includes an additional payment for language teaching support English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) for adults.
- Where families do not travel and another family cannot be matched to the property, void costs can be claimed following the same criteria as with UK Resettlement Schemes (UKRS).
- Exceptional costs can be claimed, following the same criteria as with UKRS.
- An education tariff is not included. The expectation from Treasury is that other Government Departments (OGDS) pick up additional costs from existing budgets.
- There will not be separate payments for health provisions to clinical commissioning groups. The expectation from Treasury is that other government departments pick up additional costs from existing budgets.

- There is one tariff rate per person regardless of family size which includes provision for void and set up costs.
- Payment will be claimed in 3 instalments, using the same process as UKRS.
- The payment process will be the same for those entering temporary (bridging) accommodation (with local authority support) with the exception that rent payments will not be payable until the individuals have entered their longer term accommodation.

Accommodation				
Rent (up to 4 months or when in receipt of benefit)	£15 per person, per day			
Integration				
To provide integration support (includes element for void and set up costs for accommodation)	Per person rate			
	£10,500			
Cash support				
Weekly cash support rates (up to 4 months or when in receipt of benefit)	Single (under 25)	Single (25 or over)	Couples	Child (under 18)
	£59.20	£74.70	£117.40	37.75
ESOL provision				
£850 per adult (who requires it)				

This funding package was reached with the expectation that families in this cohort will integrate more quickly than families who arrive under UKRS and that the most intensive support is provided in the first few months and not for the full 12 months.

Oxfordshire

- Each District is currently working individually sourcing properties and providing wrap around support.
- Cherwell have 10 Ministry of Defence (MoD) properties and will be tendering for the management function. Family support contracted to Asylum Welcome.
- South and Vale have 2 properties with a further 2 in the pipeline. A specialist Officer has been recruited for this programme including wraparound support.
- No properties available in City.
- There is a well-attended Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Vulnerable Migrant Coordination Group, but this is not strategic but support focused
- There is a proposal to move towards a central coordination function across Oxfordshire and initial meetings have been held.

West Oxfordshire

- There is currently no dedicated resource to oversee the ongoing commitment needed and no wraparound support in place. This is being addressed, looking at a variety of options until a countywide approach is in place.
- Cottsway Housing have agreed to offer properties, when appropriately sized and located properties become available.
- A few private landlords have been in touch and advised of the gateway requirements, which are Gas Safety Certificate; Electrical Safety Certificate; Fire risk assessment (Fire protection measures and location and type of detectors); EPC compliance (or placed on exemption register); Not on Rogue Landlords database; No outstanding complaints against landlord/ not under enforcement action.
- The scheme does not support shared accommodation.
- We are looking for a minimum of 12 months' tenancy.
- Accommodation must be sustainable for a family past the initial 12 months of Government financial support and so the Council are looking for properties where the rent is within the Local Housing Allowance rates.
- For information Local Housing Allowance rates are:-

2021 Broad Rental Market Area weekly rates

Number of bedrooms	Cherwell	Oxford	Cheltenham
3 bedrooms	£207.12	£253.15	£195.62
4 bedrooms	£298.61	£364.77	£275.01

- The Leader of the Council has initiated an officer working group to assess the capacity and capability of the Council to deliver its fair share of accommodation and wraparound services to support the schemes.