

## For publication

### Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (GV430)

<b>Meeting:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	02.11.21
<b>Cabinet portfolio:</b>	Governance
<b>Directorate:</b>	Corporate
<b>For publication</b>	

#### 1.0 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To consider participation in the national Afghan relocation and resettlement schemes and support the humanitarian efforts to protect and support refugees.

#### 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Chesterfield Borough Council agrees to take part in the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and Afghan Citizens' Resettlement schemes, subject to the partnership approach being confirmed with Derbyshire County Council.
- 2.2 That up to six families are resettled via the two schemes over a five-year period, utilising our own Council housing stock and via registered social housing providers.
- 2.3 That delegated authority is given to the portfolio holder Governance in consultation with the portfolio holders for Housing and Health and Wellbeing to consider urgent requests from Government regarding these schemes and future refugee similar resettlements schemes.

### **3.0 Reason for recommendations**

- 3.1 To contribute to the national Government and Local Government response to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, protecting current and former Locally Employed Staff and their families and refugees identified as particularly vulnerable including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT+).

### **4.0 Report details**

#### 4.1 Background

Councils support humanitarian efforts to protect and support refugees and have delivered a wide range of support across different government schemes. This includes Derbyshire district councils and Derbyshire County Council, in partnership, successfully relocating over 20 vulnerable Syrian refugee families between 2016 and 2019 as part of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

- 4.2 Due to the changing situation in Afghanistan and risk to current and former locally employed staff and vulnerable people, over 15,000 people have been evacuated by the UK Government from Afghanistan since 13 August 2021. Those coming to the UK as a result of the recent evacuation and any future arrivals will be supported by councils and their partners under two schemes, the Afghan relocation and assistance policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens' resettlement scheme (ACRS). Those arriving through both schemes will be granted immediate Indefinite Leave to Remain. This gives rights to work and benefits and the option to apply for British citizenship. The cross-government 'Operation Warm Welcome' has a focus on supporting new arrivals under these schemes to find work, pursue education and integrate into local communities.

- 4.3 Government has also announced the removal of the Habitual Resident Test. Those resettling under the scheme will be able to apply for social housing and homelessness assistance from 16 September regardless of their length of stay in the UK.

#### 4.4 Afghan relocation and assistance policy (ARAP)

On 29 December 2020, the Defence Secretary and Home Secretary announced the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). This is a new scheme that will offer relocation or other assistance to current and former Locally Employed Staff in Afghanistan to reflect the changing situation in Afghanistan. The ARAP scheme launched on 1 April 2021 and will continue to remain open and operate indefinitely.

4.5 Under the ARAP scheme, any current or former Locally Employed Staff directly employed by the UK Government and their families assessed to be at serious risk of threat to life will be eligible to apply for ARAP regardless of their employment status, rank or role, or length of time served. Examples of Locally Employed Staff roles are patrol interpreters, cultural advisors, certain embassy corporate services, and development, political and counter-terrorism jobs, among others.

#### 4.6 Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme (ACRS)

On the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2021, the Prime Minister announced the Afghan citizens' resettlement scheme. This scheme will resettle up to 20,000 people at risk, with 5,000 in the first year. This is in addition to those brought to the UK under ARAP. The ACRS will provide those put at risk by recent events in Afghanistan with a route to safety. The scheme will prioritise:

- People who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights and freedom of speech, rule of law (for example, judges, women's rights activists, academics, journalists)
- Vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT).

4.7 People will be prioritised and referred for resettlement to the UK in one of three ways:

1. Some of those who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme, which included individuals who were considered to be at particular risk – including women's rights activists, prosecutors and journalists - will be resettled under the ACRS. People who were notified by the UK government that they had been called forward or specifically authorised for evacuation, but were not able to board flights, will also be offered a place under the scheme if they subsequently come to the UK. Efforts are being made to facilitate their travel to the UK

2. The government will work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to identify and resettle refugees who have fled Afghanistan, replicating the approach the UK has taken in response to the conflict in Syria, and complementing the UK Resettlement Scheme which resettles refugees from across the world.
3. The government will work with international partners and NGOs in the region to implement a referral process for those inside Afghanistan, (where safe passage can be arranged,) and for those who have recently fled to countries in the region.

#### 4.8 Funding

Government have announced a core local authority funding tariff totalling £20,500 per person over a three-year period. Additional funding will be provided to support education, English language and health provision in year one of resettlement. The funding arrangements are similar to those utilised within the Syrian vulnerable persons' resettlement scheme.

#### 4.9 Partnership Approach

In order to successfully administrate these schemes the partnership approach successfully utilised for the Syrian vulnerable persons' resettlement scheme and other similar schemes will need to be extended. Derbyshire County Council have already made a commitment to work with district councils to facilitate the ARAP scheme and are currently considering the ACRS scheme. Several other Derbyshire districts have already agreed involvement and indicated resettlement numbers similar to the Syrian scheme.

### **5.0 Alternative options**

- 5.1 Scheme involvement is currently voluntary but strongly encouraged by Government, the Local Government Association and East Midlands Councils to share the significant pressures across the sector. Chesterfield Borough Council could choose not to take part in one or both schemes.

### **6.0 Implications for consideration – Financial and value for money**

- 6.1 There will be no direct financial implications for the Council as the schemes are fully funded. The Derbyshire partnership has significant experience of running similar schemes within the financial settlement parameters established by Government.

## **7.0 Implications for consideration – Legal**

7.1 Government guidance is now in place for the two schemes. But due to the fluid nature of the emerging situation in Afghanistan guidance is regularly updated. The ARAP scheme guidance is available [here](#). The ACRS scheme guidance is available [here](#).

7.2 Due to the speed in which scheme requirements and needs can change we are requesting that delegated authority is given to the portfolio holder Governance in consultation with the portfolio holders for Housing and Health and Wellbeing to consider urgent requests from Government regarding these schemes and future refugee resettlements schemes.

## **8.0 Implications for consideration – Human resources**

8.1 The scheme does present an additional pressure on some teams mainly within Directorate Corporate and Directorate Housing. Pressures include:

- Policy and Partnerships Team – Link into the Derbyshire Partnership, equality and diversity / community cohesion support, health and wellbeing
- Housing solutions – identifying suitable housing and feeding into environmental scanning requirements to access accommodation suitability
- Communications – Derbyshire County Council lead on media activity but liaison and co-ordination from a Chesterfield perspective is required from Chesterfield BC communications and marketing team

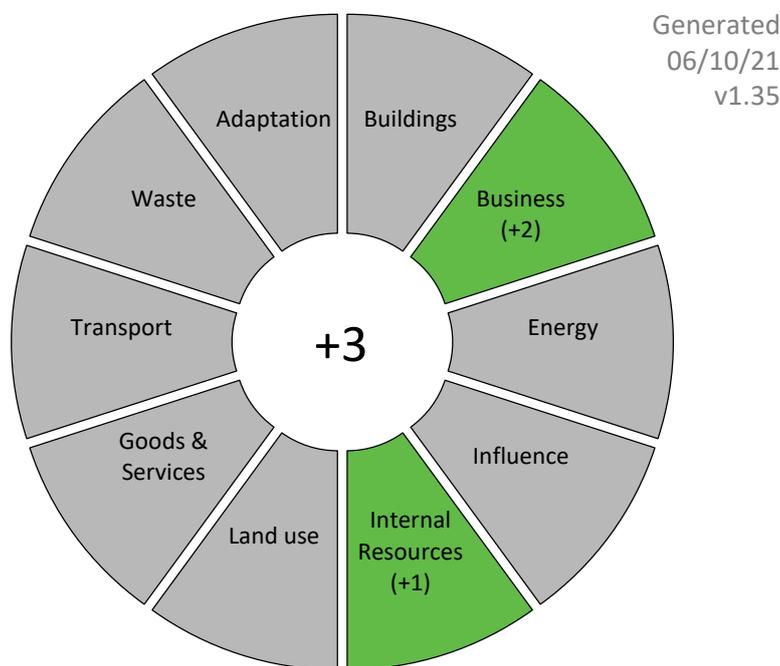
## **9.0 Implications for consideration – Council plan**

9.1 Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant is a key commitment within the Council Plan. The ARAP scheme which mainly supports Afghan nationals employed by the UK Government to support the military mission within Afghanistan is broadly supported by the Armed Forces and Armed Forces Charities. The scheme is inline and contributes to the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant particularly around recognising the commitment and sacrifices of the Armed Forces Community.

## **10.0 Implications for consideration – Climate change**

10.1 Climate Change impact for the two schemes is limited. However there are potential benefits around highly skilled people, particularly via the ARAP

scheme contributing to the local economy. The scheme is fully funded by external Government funding, however there is a relatively small internal staffing resource pressure.



Chesterfield Borough Council has committed to being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 (8 years and 2 months away).

## 11.0 Implications for consideration – Equality and diversity

11.1 The Equality Impact Assessment developed for resettlement schemes has been updated. The overall impact for protected characteristics is positive as the schemes positively disproportionately support people classed as vulnerable including children, women and girls, LGBT+ and minority groups.

## 12.0 Implications for consideration – Risk management

Description of the Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigating Action	Impact	Likelihood
Although all families for resettlement will have initial assessments, it is however possible that some needs will not	M	M	Partnership approach provides flexibility to locating refugees or relocating refugees to the most suitable locations and/or	L	L

become apparent until the family is in the UK.			<p>accommodation to suit specific needs.</p> <p>Improvements have been made to assessments following experience from the Syrian scheme.</p>		
All families will have the right to reunion i.e. dependants are entitled to join them. This poses a financial risk to the council and other organisations involved in providing services. Dependants may have needs and a right to draw on local authority provided services.	M	M	<p>Potential dependants should be noted on the application form.</p> <p>This risk has been considered in developing the number of family units which the partnership believes Derbyshire can support.</p>	M	L
Costs exceed the modelling at a family level would be a financial risk for the council.	M	M	<p>Partnership approach limits the liability of individual authorities.</p> <p>Extensive partnership experience of successfully co-ordinating similar schemes.</p> <p>Government funding package confirmed.</p>	L	L
Concerns of residents regarding security and equitable access to services.	M	H	<p>Refugees will go through a number of enhanced national level security checks to ensure that there is no known risk to community safety. The police are involved in national systems for on-going support and monitoring of those resettled.</p> <p>Careful assessment of commitment to resettle refugees to</p>	L	M

			<p>ensure that impact on housing and service availability is minimised.</p> <p>Properties in areas where GP surgeries, NHS dentists and schools are oversubscribed will not be used as part of this scheme.</p>		
<p>Although there is significant goodwill and a wish to help these refugees in the community there is also a small risk of victimisation or harassment for any new arrivals.</p>	M	L	<p>The location of resettled refugees will not be made public.</p> <p>Enhanced fire safety checks will be made by Derbyshire Fire and Rescue service.</p> <p>Derbyshire constabulary are a key member of the Derbyshire partnership.</p> <p>Experience from previous schemes identified Chesterfield Borough as a generally welcoming community with significant community and voluntary sector support and engagement available to support cohesion.</p>	M	L

### Decision information

<b>Key decision number</b>	<b>1057</b>
<b>Wards affected</b>	<b>All</b>

### Document information

<b>Report author</b>
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**Background documents**

These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when the report was prepared.

None

**Appendices to the report – none**