

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

27 September 2021

Subject: **Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme**

Cabinet Member: **Cllr Richard Clewer – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism and Health & Wellbeing**

Key Decision: **Non-Key**

Executive Summary

This report sets out the Cabinets proposed offer to the Government on the number of households/families it is putting forward as Wiltshire's commitment to the national Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) which was announced following the evacuation of citizens from Afghanistan.

This scheme is in addition to the already established Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme where the Council have committed to settle 3 families.

The purpose of this report is to confirm the offer and then put into place the requisite approvals, in line with the Councils constitution, to accept the funding from Government to enable the scheme.

Proposal(s)

Cabinet is asked to approve:

- a) The offer to Government of Wiltshire's commitment to house 20 households in long term settlement through the ACRS and ARAP schemes;
- b) The acceptance to receive funding of £20,520 per person over the 3 year duration of the scheme, with an estimated total value of £1.6m;
- c) The acceptance of additional funding in the first year only of up to £4,500 per child and £850 per adult for Education and English Language respectively as well as £2,600 per person for Health;
- d) The £28 per person per night funding to provide the wrap around support required to support citizens at the bridging hotel within Wiltshire;

e) The acceptance of funding provided by the Afghan housing costs fund.

Reason for Proposal(s)

In line with the Councils constitution, to allow the acceptance of funding associated with the offer to resettle, long term, up to 20 households through the ACRS as well as the wrap around funding to support those citizens in the bridging hotel.

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive

Wiltshire Council

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Purpose of Report

1. To advise Members of Wiltshire's offer to Government on the Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme together with the associated funding that flows from Government to enable the resettlement.

Background

2. The ARAP scheme was formally launched on 1 April 2021 and will cover any current or former locally employed staff directly employed HMG assessed to be at serious risk of threat to life.
3. The ACRS was then announced following the evacuation of Afghanistan citizens. It is a scheme designed to provide protection for people at risk which will prioritise those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan as well as vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk.
4. The Government is committed to resettling up to 5,000 people through the ACRS over the coming year and is reliant on local authorities identifying potential suitable accommodation.
5. On 13 September the Government wrote to All Council Leaders and Chief Executives setting out the proposals for the ACRS, and the details on the funding package. The funding package for ACRS is in line with the ARAP scheme and will provide for:
 - £20,520 to cover the local authority welcome, integration offer and provision of services
 - up to £4,500 per child to cover education provision, subject to their age (year one only)
 - £850 to cover English language provision, for adults requiring this support (year one only)
 - £2,600 to cover health provision (year one only)

6. It should be noted that the NHS would ultimately receive the Health funding rather than the Council.

Main Considerations for the Council

7. In putting the offer forward the Council had to have consideration to the suitable accommodation available to it over the short to medium term to support resettlement as well as the offers that have been put forward from private landlords.
8. Throughout the Council has been clear that its own Council Housing stock would not be used in any part of the offer, thereby keeping the stock available solely for local residents in need of social housing. However, it will be up to registered providers in Wiltshire as to whether they wish to offer accommodation for resettlement where they have not been able to let it to people in housing need.
9. The council will seek accommodation for 20 families in the private rented sector from landlords who offer homes including the Council's own housing company as the Council can nominate families to properties under the existing nomination agreement.
10. There will undoubtedly be an increase demand on Council resources to enable the integration and successful resettlement, and it is expected that the Councils existing resettlement team will need to be significantly expanded to cope with the increase in families being resettled.
11. The funding associated with the scheme will be used to mitigate this cost, as well as other expected costs arising from the process. Although not fully known it is anticipated that the funding should cover the Councils costs over the 3 year term of the programme.
12. As the funding to be received is over £750K and the amount to therefore be spent will be over £250K, in accordance with the Councils constitution, Cabinet needs to formally resolve acceptance of the grant funding and its subsequent expenditure.
13. In addition, the Home Office will provide funding of £28 per person per night to provide wrap around support for those Afghan citizens currently accommodated in the bridging hotel within Wiltshire.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

63. Owing to the urgent nature of the decision and report engagement with scrutiny has been informal.

Safeguarding Implications

64. None have been identified as arising directly from this report.

Public Health Implications

65. None have been identified as arising directly from this report.

Procurement Implications

66. None have been identified as arising directly from this report.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

67. None have been identified as arising directly from this report.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

68. None have been identified as arising directly from this report.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

69. The Council would not be in line with its constitution by formally resolving to offer and received the associated funding and commitment to future spend on those citizens in the scheme.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

70. Although viewed as minimal the funding received over the 3 years may not be sufficient to cover all costs associated with the resettlement programme.

Financial Implications

71. The financial implications are implicit throughout the report and are based on 20 households, with an assumption of 4 per household. The actual number maybe per household maybe more. Based on the assumption the total amount of funding that could be received from Government if 20 households are resettled is estimated to be in excess of £1.6m.

Legal Implications

72. None have been identified as arising directly from this report.

Workforce Implications

73. The workforce implications have been identified in the main considerations of the report.

Options Considered

74. The Council could choose not to submit an offer to Government, but this option has been discounted.

Conclusions

75. This report demonstrates Wiltshire's commitment to do everything it can to support, integrate and welcome Afghan citizens into Wiltshire communities and life.

Report Authors:

Andy Brown (Corporate Director Resources & Deputy Chief Executive),
andy.brown@wiltshire.gov.uk

23/09/2021

Appendices

Background Papers