

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY**

A meeting of the Executive Member for Community Safety was held on Wednesday 13 December 2023.

**PRESENT:** Councillors , J Thompson

**PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillors

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

**OFFICERS:** S Blood and M Walker

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors

1 **SAFE AND LEGAL ROUTES**

The Director of Environment and Community Services submitted a report, the purpose of which was to seek approval to extend participation in refugee resettlement schemes by adding UKRS to Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)/ Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ARCS ) and any new schemes in the future.

The report also sought approval to extend the current pledge of 5 families per year, totalling 15 families between 2021 to 2024. This report was also seeking approval to welcome 5 families per year over the period 2024 – 2028.

The report outlined that prior to the Covid pandemic and a scrutiny report recommended to Executive to sign up to UKRS (UK Resettlement Scheme). However, due to the pandemic, this was put on hold and no new funding instructions were released by central government.

Since then, the local authority pledged to resettle 15 families under ARAP (Afghan Resettlement Assistance Policy) and ACRS (Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme). 13 of those families have now arrived and remain in Middlesbrough.

Middlesbrough is home to a significant number of asylum seekers. However, the number of asylum seekers has not exceeded the cluster limit in a number of years. This level has been constant and manageable throughout. In addition, excellent support both within the local authority and through VCS partners is in place, which means there have not been unmanageable pressures in some time. Work to reduce pressures includes the EMAT (Ethnic Minority Achievement Team), NAP (New Arrival Pathway), and REP (Refugee Employment Program).

In summary, the report recommends Middlesbrough Council accepts UKRS (vulnerable people resettlement) and combines this with existing pledges towards ARAP/ACRS (Afghan resettlement) to five families per year.

The report seeks approval to participate in refugee resettlement schemes via

## UKRS to ARAP/ARCS.

It also seeks approval to extend the current pledge of 5 families per year, totalling 15 families over the 3 year period. This pledge was for the period 2021 to 2024. This report is seeking approval to welcome 5 families per year from any of the schemes over the period 2024 – 2028. This would generate potential grant-funded income total of £2,757,950.

Approving this scheme would support vulnerable people and the implications of the recommendations outlined in the report have been considered by the appropriate officers of the Council which was set out in the main body of the report.

## OPTIONS

### **Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended**

1. Agreeing to resettle a smaller number of ARAP and UKRS families. This is not recommended as the funding associated with larger families will allow for greater diversification, community cohesion, and resilience.
2. Not to agree to take part in UKRS.

## ORDERED

That the Executive:

- Agrees for Middlesbrough Council to sign up to UKRS
- Agrees for the pledge of supporting 15 families to be changed to 5 per year. These families will be a mixture of ARAP/ACRS and UKRS, with an expectation of 2 families through ARAP/ACRS and 3 families through UKRS per year. This level of resettlement has proven to be manageable through the work already done on ARAP/ACRS since 2021.
- Agrees to extend the contracts of the current team to cover the period of this grant. Funding will cover any redundancy costs if the grant funding ends.
- Agrees to the recruitment of a team leader ensure consistency and specialist support to the team.
- Agrees to the recruitment of a Project Support Officer.

## REASONS

The decisions were supported by the following reasons:

Agreeing to the proposal would have numerous potential benefits, including:

- a. Increasing funding available within the local authority.
- b. Building on the expertise of a highly experienced team of professionals already employed by the Council, thereby retaining their skills and knowledge.
- c. Increasing the team, thereby providing employment opportunities.
- d. Diversifying Middlesbrough as a whole by looking at resettling families in more traditionally White-British wards.
- e. Improving overall community cohesion and resilience.

f. Decreasing the number of empty properties in Middlesbrough.

**The decision(s) will come into force after five working days following the day the decision(s) was published unless the decision becomes subject to the call in procedures.**