

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**Housing and Health Committee****12 March 2014****Position Statement on Supporting Syrian Refugees****Executive Director (Housing and Community Care)****PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To inform committee of the Council's commitment to offer accommodation and support for refugees from Syria.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 COSLA recently circulated a Briefing to local authorities advising of a scheme for the accommodation of Syrian refugees who have fled the ongoing conflict in that country. The UK Government has announced that it intends to relocate some of the most vulnerable refugees under what it has termed the Vulnerable Person Relocation scheme and is seeking notifications from local authorities that may wish to be involved in supporting this process.
- 1.2 During the Kosovan crisis in the 1990s Perth and Kinross Council planned to support a refugee relocation scheme similar to the one being proposed by using difficult-to-let houses in the Muirton area. However, this stock has now been demolished and there are no longer any significant concentrations of difficult to let stock anywhere in the Perth and Kinross area.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 Although we have limited capacity within the social-rented sector and have a number of people on our housing waiting list, there are around 10,000 private-rented properties in the Perth and Kinross area, making up around 14% of our housing stock. As a result, we have been working in partnership with private sector landlords for several years and have helped over 700 households to access accommodation in this sector since 2009.
- 2.2 For Perth and Kinross Council to support the Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme, the private rented sector will offer the greatest choice of properties to meet the specific needs of these Syrian families and individuals. The size and range of this sector and vacancy levels are such that accommodation could be identified at relatively short notice to support these very vulnerable individuals.

- 2.3 The COSLA briefing suggests that the UK Government will provide funding to cover the costs associated with this scheme for the first year.
- 2.4 Given the very difficult circumstances and experiences of the Syrian refugees we will need to make sure a range of agencies and services were ready and able to offer practical and emotional support, including:

- Education and Children services – support from the schools, as well and children and families social work services
- Health Services
- A range of other social work services, including mental health services
- Translation services
- MEAD / Women's Aid

2.5 Financial Support

The Syrian refugees would require a source of income to cover their daily living costs, which we could assume would be consistent with both existing DWP & Home Office rules on refugees and the policy guidance within the UK Government's Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme.

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 Perth and Kinross Council is in a very good position in terms of the size of the private rented sector and the positive relationship that we have developed with private landlords and letting agents to house vulnerable refugees. Whilst we don't have details of the specific needs of the Syrians, it is anticipated that suitable vacancies could be identified at relatively short notice if required.
- 3.2 It is assumed that the UK Government would cover all of the associated costs of the scheme initially, although families and individuals who require to remain in Perth and Kinross for a longer period and may need access to further support for which additional negotiations will take place.
- 3.3 Committee is asked to agree in principle to respond positively to the Vulnerable Persons Notification Scheme and notify the UK Government accordingly. This agreement in principle is subject to Committee receiving further details of the scheme.

Author(s)

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Approved

Name	Designation	Date
John Walker	Executive Director, Housing and Community Care	1 March 2014

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

The undernoted table should be completed for all reports. Where the answer is 'yes', the relevant section(s) should also be completed. Where the answer is 'no', the relevant section(s) should be marked 'not available (n/a)'.

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	Yes
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	Yes
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	None
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	None
Risk	Yes
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	Yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 The Single Outcome Agreement for Perth and Kinross has five outcomes which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. The following are relevant to this report.

- Giving every child the best start in life
- Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens
- Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy
- Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives
- Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 The proposal relates to the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives as detailed above.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 This will be determined when further information becomes available.

Workforce

- 2.2 None

Asset Management (land, property, IT)

- 2.3 None

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Assessed as **not relevant** and the following positive outcomes expected following implementation:

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Act and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Risk

- 3.3 This will be determined when further information becomes available.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 The Heads of Finance and Legal Services have been consulted on this report.

External

- 4.2 None

5. Communication

- 5.1 None

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

3. APPENDICES

None

