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# NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

1 November 2022

## Cabinet

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Update on Humanitarian Protection for People from Ukraine</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	To provide Cabinet with an update on the range of supports being offered by the Council and its community planning partners to those people seeking sanctuary from the conflict in Ukraine
<b>Recommendation:</b>	That Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) notes the support provided to date to Ukrainian Displaced People (UDPs) who have settled in North Ayrshire</li><li>(ii) notes the plans to reinstate 30 decommissioned one-bedroom Council properties at Glebe Place, Saltcoats as temporary accommodation for Ukrainian Displaced People, using funding of £0.486m allocated by Scottish Government for this purpose</li><li>(iii) agrees that officers continue to investigate further options to accommodate people displaced by the Ukraine conflict</li></ul>

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## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 North Ayrshire Council is fully committed to supporting the UK's humanitarian programmes.
- 1.2 Since 2015 the Council and its CPP partners have supported 173 refugee and displaced person households (518 people) to settle in North Ayrshire across the various resettlement schemes, with work ongoing to accommodate further people across the active programmes.
- 1.3 Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the Council has worked closely with Scottish Government, COSLA and other local authorities to provide support and accommodation to Ukrainian people fleeing the conflict, with 100 households (235 people) accommodated in homes across North Ayrshire at 30 September 2022.
- 1.4 This report provides an update on the accommodation and supports already in place, along with plans to provide further accommodation using grant funding of £486k available from the Scottish Government for this purpose.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 North Ayrshire Council is fully committed to supporting the UK's humanitarian programmes. This is illustrated by our participation in the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), the Afghanistan

Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), Homes for Ukraine (HFU) and the Scottish Super Sponsorship Scheme (SSSS) to accommodate displaced people from Ukraine.

2.2 Since 2015 the Council and its CPP partners have supported 173 refugee and displaced person households (518 people) to settle in North Ayrshire across the various resettlement schemes (see table 1).

*Table 1 – Refugees and Displaced People Settling in North Ayrshire at 4 October 2022*

<b>Resettlement Schemes Since 2015</b>	<b>No of Households</b>	<b>No of Individuals</b>
Syrian/UK Resettlement Resettlement Scheme (Council & RSL housing)	43	211
Afghan Resettlement Schemes	8	36
Ukrainian resettlement - Homes for Ukraine/ Super Sponsor Scheme/ family visa	100	235
Ukraine - Welcome Hub (interim hotel accommodation)	22	36
<b>Total refugee and displaced persons settled within North Ayrshire since 2015</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>518</b>

### **Update on Humanitarian Protection for People from Ukraine**

2.3 On Thursday 24 February 2022 Russian armed forces invaded Ukraine. COSLA wrote to all Local Authority Chief Executives on 28 February asking them to provide an indication of their individual Council's position with regard to capacity. On 8 March 2022, North Ayrshire Council's Cabinet agreed:

- to make a pledge to offer accommodation and sanctuary to people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine
- that officers should work closely with COSLA to develop plans for providing assistance
- for practical support to be given to third sector organisations operating in North Ayrshire who are making plans to offer direct assistance to those displaced by the conflict.

2.4 Since early March 2022 three key visa routes have been developed for people wishing to come to Scotland:

- Family sponsor scheme
- UK Government Homes for Ukraine (HfU) Scheme – 3-year visa, with applicants expected to identify their own individual sponsor/ accommodation
- Scottish Government Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme (SSSS) – no need for applicants to find their own sponsor/ accommodation. People of Scotland have

been asked to offer expressions of interest (EOI) to act as hosts; Scottish local authorities have also been asked to identify accommodation. At its launch the scheme included an immediate commitment to host a minimum of 3,000 Ukrainian refugees across Scotland.

- 2.5 North Ayrshire Council officers have been working closely with Scottish Government and COSLA since March, with representation on key groups. Officers have also been working closely with other councils, particularly through COSLA, SOLACE, ALACHO and within Ayrshire.
- 2.6 Officers from across the Refugee Task Force have been proactive in identifying suitable accommodation and preparing it for arrival. They are also assisting with providing initial support and linking in with support services such as GPs, schools, dentists, welfare benefits, etc.
- 2.7 Council officers have been active in carrying out property and disclosure checks for both HfU and EOI properties/ sponsors, where appropriate.
- 2.8 SSSS arrivals were originally being accommodated short-term in a small number of port of entry hotels (welcome hubs), pending being matched to longer-term accommodation through the COSLA matching service. Councils across Scotland have identified longer-term accommodation, but a number of factors have made the national matching service relatively slow in moving people from hub hotels to longer term accommodation. In recent months the Council has therefore opted to undertake its own local matching.
- 2.9 The uptake of visas has been significantly higher than the 3,000 originally anticipated, impacting on Scotland's ability to provide short and longer-term accommodation. This has resulted in further welcome hubs being established across Scotland at short notice, including the use of two large cruise ships docked in Leith and Glasgow and, locally, the use of 23 bedrooms and meeting space at the Riverside Lodge, Irvine.
- 2.10 Due to the high volume of applications being received compared to initial expectations and the low availability of short- and longer-term accommodation, on 13 July Scottish Government took the difficult decision to pause new visa applications. Open visas are still being progressed.
- 2.11 Paul Johnston – Director-General Communities wrote to local authorities on 8 August asking councils to consider their ability to provide the following to assist in meeting short-and longer-term accommodation need for people arriving in Scotland from Ukraine in the coming months:
  - unused/ surplus residential stock
  - unused/ surplus premises, such as schools and care homes
  - serviced sites to accommodate modular accommodation
- 2.12 To further manage demand, a rapid review of the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme has been undertaken by Scottish Government, with workstreams focusing on:

- Framework of need and use of the private rented sector
- Matching scheme
- Empowerment
- Direct access to housing stock
- International examples of support

### **North Ayrshire response to date: medium- longer-term accommodation**

- 2.13 North Ayrshire Refugee Task Force, which has representation from across the Community Planning Partnership, has continued to meet regularly since early March to respond to the Ukraine crisis.
- 2.14 In total, 232 Ukrainians have already been supported to settle in medium-longer term accommodation, comprising:
- 158 Ukrainian people (93 adults and 65 children) successfully settled in 62 longer-term furnished tenancies (56 NAC and 6 RSL)
  - 65 Ukrainians being hosted locally by 29 HfU sponsors
  - 9 Ukrainians having been successfully matched with 6 EOI hosts
- 2.15 A further three families are known to be living in North Ayrshire under the Family Sponsor Scheme.
- 2.16 In addition to the 62 social rented properties outlined at para 2.14 above, a further 18 houses (8 NAC and 10 RSL) have been identified and will be ready for matching to families from Ukraine in the coming weeks, increasing the total to social rented 80 properties.
- 2.17 Based on current and planned accommodation, it is likely that the number of Ukrainian displaced people living in medium- longer-term accommodation in North Ayrshire will be approximately 270 by the end of December 2022.
- 2.18 Although this is a very significant achievement in the timescale and when comparing North Ayrshire's Scottish population share of 2.5% against the Scottish Government's initial 3,000 UDP commitment, it should be noted that, due to the exceptional number of Ukrainian visas applied for, it represents approximately 1.5% of the number of people who have already arrived in Scotland, before considering the number of people with live visas who may still decide to travel here.

### **Welcome hubs**

- 2.19 Due to the significant number of people arriving through the initial ports of entry and the pressure placed on the welcome hubs there, in late June Scottish Government took the decision to book 15 hotel rooms at the Riverside Lodge, Irvine, with the first 13 Ukrainians arriving there on 7 July 2022.
- 2.20 North Ayrshire Council responded immediately, with staff initially based in the hotel 8am-8pm Monday to Sunday and overnight out of hours arrangements put in place.

Following the development of robust systems and processes, the on-site staff presence was reduced to 8am-6pm in September.

- 2.21 Following discussions between Council officers, Scottish Government and the Riverside Lodge's management team and in recognition of the experience gained by Council and hotel staff over the last three months and the national demand for accommodation, Scottish Government recently extended the number and duration of its hotel booking, with 23 rooms now booked until March 2023.
- 2.22 The Council has already successfully rehoused 60 people from Riverside Lodge to longer-term accommodation in North Ayrshire properties, local RSL stock and in other local authority areas.

### **Impact of ongoing crisis in Ukraine and projected arrivals**

- 2.23 There are significant concerns across local government regarding the national capacity to respond to both the short- and medium- long-term response to the Ukraine crisis, with pressures on accommodation and support services close to crisis point.
- 2.24 Should the total number of Ukrainian arrivals in Scotland rise to, say, 26,000 and the Council seeks to accommodate its 2.46% population share of the national scheme, this would mean supporting a total of 640 Ukrainians in the area in the coming months. Assuming an average household composition of 2.4 people, North Ayrshire's total number of properties required would rise to 266, mainly comprising social rented properties, (NAC and its RSL partners) but with support through HfU, EOI and use of the private rented sector. This means an extra c.151 properties would be required in addition to the current 115 households, and based on the current demographic, 148 Council houses in total compared to the current 64 already identified. North Ayrshire's current Ukraine accommodation represents approximately 5.8% of annual housing allocations. The foregoing analysis indicates this could rise to 13.5% if no other housing solutions are identified.
- 2.25 It is imperative that the Council maintains and protects its statutory homelessness duties, therefore mainstream allocations would be most affected if a further 84 Council houses are required as medium- long-term housing for Ukraine.
- 2.26 In addition to the local accommodation pressures arising from the Ukraine crisis, a report to the Council's Cabinet in December 2022 will provide details of a UK-wide scheme which will require 9,000 asylum seekers to be accommodated in Scotland, with an estimated 111 asylum seekers likely to come to North Ayrshire. Although the intention is that they will mainly be housed in private rented sector accommodation, the full impact on the housing sector is yet to be understood.

### **Way forward**

- 2.27 Officers are continuing to work closely with the Scottish Government, COSLA and other Ayrshire councils to identify options to increase the supply of short-, medium- and longer-term accommodation to host arrivals from Ukraine.

- 2.28 The five blocks of six one-bedroom, low demand flats at Glebe Place, Saltcoats were identified as a Council housing regeneration project in the Estate Based Regeneration Plan January 2019. The 30 flats were scheduled for demolition following the successful rehousing of tenants to alternative accommodation, with the vacated site to be redeveloped through the Strategic Housing Investment Plan in 2024-25.
- 2.29 Following an assessment of the properties and discussions with Scottish Government, these 30 units were proposed to the Scottish Government as an opportunity to accommodate Ukrainian individuals/ couples for a period of up to three years, subject to the full cost of reinstating the properties to the appropriate housing standard being funded by Scottish Government. The demolition/ redevelopment project could then be reprofiled within the SHIP to 2026/27, therefore maintaining the overall SHIP commitment of 1,625 new units by 31 March 2027.
- 2.30 Following clarifications being submitted on the project works, costs and timescales and a site visit taking place, Scottish Government formally confirmed their support for the project on 30 September 2022, with the total estimated reinstatement costs of £0.486m to be funded as the first project from a new £50m national fund established for this purpose.
- 2.31 The project works will be undertaken by the Council's Building Services team, with the works due to commence on site in mid-late October and be completed by the end of January 2023.
- 2.32 Officers are currently pursuing further options for increasing the number of properties available to accommodate Ukrainian people, without adversely affecting existing North Ayrshire housing applicants. Options currently being explored include:
- Temporary reinstatement of surplus hostel and residential accommodation
  - Identification of serviced sites to accommodate modular accommodation

### **3. Proposals**

- 3.1 That Cabinet:
- i. notes the support provided to date to Ukrainian Displaced People (UDPs) who have settled in North Ayrshire
  - ii. notes the plans to reinstate 30 decommissioned one-bedroom Council properties at Glebe Place, Saltcoats as temporary accommodation for Ukrainian Displaced People, using funding of £0.486m allocated by Scottish Government for this purpose
  - iii. agrees that officers continue to investigate further options to accommodate people displaced by the Ukraine conflict

### **4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty**

#### **Financial**

- 4.1 Funding is available from both the UK and Scottish Government to assist local

authorities in providing accommodation and support services to people fleeing Ukraine. This includes support for housing costs, translation services and support to access English language classes. COSLA continue to work with the UK and Scottish Governments to develop clear eligibility criteria for different workstreams within these funds. The capital costs relating to the reinstatement of Glebe Place, Saltcoats will be met from a new £50m Scottish Government fund established to increase the supply of longer-term accommodation.

### **Human Resources**

- 4.2 Support for individuals and families is being provided by the Services who make up the North Ayrshire Refugee Task Force. Each Service is currently reviewing their resources and several new posts have been created to respond to the increased scale and pace across each of the refugee and humanitarian schemes.

### **Legal**

- 4.3 None

### **Equality/Socio-economic**

- 4.4 Many of the refugees and displaced people who have settled within North Ayrshire have arrived with a variety of skills and attributes which enrich our communities, and, in a local context, this may help to address some of the demographic challenges within North Ayrshire.

### **Climate Change and Carbon**

- 4.5 None

### **Key Priorities**

- 4.6 Supporting refugees and displaced people to resettle within North Ayrshire will contribute to achieving the Council Plan priorities of 'Active and strong communities' and 'People and communities are safe'.

### **Community Wealth Building**

- 4.7 Many of those who settle in North Ayrshire as part of the national resettlement schemes are well educated, able to speak English, and able to positively contribute to their new communities.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 The members of the Syrian Refugee Task Force have been consulted regarding the contents of this report. Members represent a wide number of internal and external services including Housing and Public Protection, Finance and Corporate Support, Education and Communities, Health & Social Care Partnership, Economic Development & Regeneration, Police Scotland, Department for Work & Pensions, Primary Care NHS Ayrshire & Arran, The Ayrshire Community Trust, Ayrshire College.

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**Background Papers**

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