

Cabinet – 7 September 2022

Award of contracts for provision of Refugee Resettlement Support services

Portfolio: Councillor Ali - Customer

Related portfolios: Councillor Perry – Deputy Leader, Resilient Communities

Service: Money Home Job (MHJ)

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Aim

To ensure we effectively deliver our commitments to support the integration of any existing and new refugee households welcomed to Walsall through the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), Homes for Ukraine (HfU), and Afghan Resettlement schemes consisting of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

2. Summary

2.1 This Council has a history of warmly welcoming a range of people from many different countries. We:

- have housed and supported 20 Syrian individuals;
- have pledged to help a further 20 refugees through the UKRS;
- supported children through the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS);
- created a Community Sponsorship pathway;
- reacted at great speed to house and support 115 Afghan individuals, who have assisted our armed forces and/or are vulnerable; and
- are currently (as at 16 August 2022) helping 50 Ukrainian individuals (and their sponsors) to resettle into Walsall.

- 2.2 In order to operate this resettlement support, we need expert providers who are able to offer a full integration support package, including translation services. This role is currently filled by the Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC), following an original open tender process, and compliant contract extension and variations. The Council has retendered all of these services, and to provide opportunities for smaller and/or expert providers, split this tendering process into three lots covering:
- Lot 1 – UKRS
 - Lot 2 – HfU
 - Lot 3 – Afghan Resettlement schemes (ARAP and ACRS)
- 2.3 A public advertisement was placed on the Council's e-tendering portal 'Intend' and published on Contracts Finder and on the Find a Tender Service, on 14 July 2022 and closed on 15 August 2022. An Open Procedure Procurement Process was used to invite tenders.
- 2.4 This Cabinet report should be read and considered in conjunction with the 'Award of contracts for the provision of Refugee Resettlement Support services' Private Session Agenda Cabinet Report.
- 2.5 This is a key decision because it exceeds the threshold for significant expenditure and affects more than two wards.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That following consideration of the confidential report in the private session of the agenda, Cabinet approves the award of the contracts:
- For the period 1 December 2022 to 30 November 2025 with an option to extend for up to a further 24 months to 30 November 2027 in accordance with the financial implications detailed in the private session report to the Refugee and Migrant Centre for the provision of Refugee Resettlement Support Lot 1 – United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme, noting that external factors may result in a future significant increase in the number of households requiring support and that any additional financial burden as a result would be fully reimbursed by central government tariffs
 - For the period 1 December 2022 to 30 November 2023 with an option to extend for up to a further 24 months to 30 November 2025 in accordance with the financial implications detailed in the private session report to the Refugee and Migrant Centre for the provision of Refugee Resettlement Support Lot 2 – Homes for Ukraine, noting that external factors may result in a future significant increase in the number of households requiring support and that any additional financial burden as a result would be fully reimbursed by central government tariffs
 - For the period 1 December 2022 to 30 November 2024 with an option to extend for up to a further 24 months to 30 November 2026 in accordance with the financial implications detailed in the private session report to the Refugee and Migrant Centre for the provision of Refugee Resettlement

Support Lot 3 – Afghan Resettlement schemes, noting that external factors may result in a future increase in the number of households requiring support and that any additional financial burden as a result would be fully reimbursed by central government tariffs

- 3.2 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director of Children’s and Customer, to enter into a contract/s to deliver the ‘Refugee Resettlement Support services’ and to subsequently authorise the sealing or signing of any associated contracts, deeds or other related documents for such services including the optional extension periods.
- 3.3 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director for Children’s and Customer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Customer, to authorise any variations to the contractual arrangements or other related documents for the services identified above, should this be required at any time during the contract term, in line with Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council’s Contract Rules.

4. Report detail - know

Context

- 4.1 Central Government policy seeks the voluntary assistance of councils to house and support refugees across a number of schemes:
 - The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) was launched in January 2014, and in September 2015 it was expanded with an aim to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection.
 - This was in addition to the Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) which was launched in 2016, with the aim of resettling up to 3,000 ‘at-risk’ refugee children, including their families.
 - In 2021, Government initiated a broader United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), which replaced the VPRS and VCRS, and is open to vulnerable refugees ‘from a range of regions of conflict and instability across the globe’. In addition, they have put in place schemes to:
 - Assist Afghan families who helped our armed forces, and/or are vulnerable following the change in regime in Afghanistan. The ARAP scheme offers relocation and support for former locally employed Afghan staff who helped our armed forces, such as patrol interpreters, cultural advisors, certain embassy corporate services, and development, political and counter-terrorism jobs. The ACRS scheme prioritises those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women’s rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law, and vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk.
 - Assist Ukrainian households fleeing the war. On 24 February 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine, and this has so far displaced several million Ukrainian

people. Central government put in place three resettlement schemes. The Ukraine Family Scheme allows applicants to join family members or extend their stay in the UK, and the Ukraine Extension Scheme allows Ukrainian nationals and their immediate family members to apply for permission to stay in the UK subject to relevant dates. Whilst the Council and its partners will help all members of our community to fully integrate, its specific role is to provide dedicated integration support to Ukrainians (and their hosts) arriving through the Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme, otherwise known as Homes for Ukraine. This scheme is where members of the public and organisations can volunteer a spare room/property to host Ukrainian households. Government request that the accommodation is made available for a minimum of six months, and offer hosts a £350 monthly thankyou payment. The scheme is now also being opened up to unaccompanied minors.

4.2 The Council has assisted refugees through all of the aforementioned schemes:

- In July 2016 Cabinet pledged to resettle 20 Syrian individuals (in families) into Walsall. The households arrived in 2017 and received five years of integration support from the Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC), having been appointed through open tender;
- The July 2016 Cabinet report also agreed delegated authority to resettle additional tranches and through this Walsall pledged to help a further 20 refugees through the UKRS, and we are currently supporting four individuals. Households assisted through UKRS will receive up to five years support;
- supported children through VCRS;
- In March 2021 Cabinet agreed to be part of the government's Voluntary Refugee Community Sponsorship Scheme and endorsed a process for Walsall. We have subsequently received a family of four through this route, which while unfortunately are no longer able to be with the community sponsor, the Council subsequently picked up the resettlement responsibility through the UKRS route;
- In July 2021 this Cabinet pledged to resettle 80 Afghan individuals (in families) who had supported our armed forces, and in September 2021 Cabinet increased this pledge to up to 120 individuals, and also agreed in principle to support the ACRS. Walsall has housed and supported 115 Afghan individuals through these schemes, reacting with considerable speed to take in the first families in August 2021. All families have been fully supported since arrival, and will receive up to three years support;
- Since the launch of Homes for Ukraine in April 2022, Walsall are now helping 50 Ukrainian individuals (and their sponsors) to resettle into Walsall. As at 16 August 2022 64 visas have been issued (including the 50 arrivals) so we are expecting further arrivals in the near future. Currently HfU households will

receive support for up to one year, in line with current government funding commitments.

4.3 To effectively support these refugees, we commissioned RMC through open tender in 2016 to provide integration support to 20 Syrian refugees. To react at speed to the Afghan and then Ukraine situation, we extended and varied RMC's contract to provide emergency support for these cohorts as well. This contract, which is fully funded by central government tariffs, ends 30 November 2022, and is valued at approximately £630,000, including extensions and variations, but this is dependent on how many more Ukrainian arrivals there are. This support takes the form of an overarching support plan for each individual, and core tasks include but are not limited to:

- Ensure property is suitably prepared and furnished for arrival;
- Assist with tenancy sign up and applying for benefits;
- Help open a bank account;
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) assessment;
- Register with GP;
- Identify any mental health or safeguarding concerns and make relevant referrals;
- Assist into employment and training;
- Integration into the community, places of worship, welcome events;
- Provide sessions on British values and culture; and
- There are additional tasks for the Ukrainian contract, in supporting the sponsor household as well as the arriving household.

4.4 In addition to the core tasks outlined in 4.3 there are additional requirements per lot as below:

- Lot 1 UKRS – The current pledge is to help resettle 20 individuals. However the figure could change in a planned way in that the Council decide to pledge to receive a greater number, and/ or it could increase significantly in an unplanned way, such as a response to humanitarian crisis, war etc. It is particularly important on this lot that the Provider demonstrates the capacity and flexibility to be able to redirect resources to most urgent need, and access additional resources at speed – as demonstrated by the situations that have recently arisen in Afghanistan and then Ukraine. The Provider will also support any failed Community sponsor applicants through the UKRS route who will essentially transfer onto the generic UKRS route. They will also support newly arrived migrants who arrive in the UK but do not fit the current schemes and need dedicated support. For many of these individuals they have a need and the Provider will need to provide an initial emergency service to those migrants whilst we ascertain a possible housing intervention.
- Lot 2 HfU – Coordination and monitoring of the safeguarding and housing standards checks that are being carried out by the relevant Council services. Support to both guests and host/sponsor. The provider will need to have positive links with the Ukrainian community and community organisations.
- Lot 3 Afghan Resettlement schemes – the Afghan scheme is quite well established, and it is just additionally important that the Provider also has

positive links with the Afghan community and community organisations.

4.5 Consultation was carried out with service users, as detailed within para 4.31. The results directly influenced the new service provision being procured, with our resettlement customers telling us:

- Initial reception to Walsall needs to be phased with key information not loaded upon arrival or within the first few days;
- The area orientation by foot and public transport is helpful and helps with things like planning journeys and understanding the area;
- Service users want to access employment and training and want to take part in volunteering and work experience;
- Language can be a barrier for some service users so access to a good quality provision and networks with accredited English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) providers is important;
- Access to health services and information on the procedures is vital especially when navigating through the different services;
- Access to benefits and regular updates on rights and responsibilities such as driving laws and how housing systems work in different local authority areas;
- Many of our service users want to be able to maximise their potential and want to understand the processes and rules in the UK and integrate within communities.

Council Plan

4.6 The Resettlement Support services will contribute to the Council's priorities as follows:

- Economic - Enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses – the support provider will work with incoming service users in particular working to increase employment prospects and to provide access to education opportunities.
- People - Encourage our residents to lead more active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing – the support provider will be required to support service users in maintaining a tenancy, promoting independence, and ensuring access to mental and physical health and wellbeing services.
- Children - Have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well – the support provider will carry out regular wellbeing checks with the family, and assist with applying for school places and accessing school holiday activity clubs.
- Communities - Empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community – the support provider will be responsible for ensuring the families are integrated into communities and therefore will enhance community cohesion.

Risk management

- 4.7 There is a risk that there will be delays in new service implementation. This risk is low given that a suitable mobilisation period has been allowed for in the timetable.
- 4.8 There is an impact on available school places and healthcare services, and could have unintended additional demands on these services or adult social care in future. However, we are currently only pledging to help 20 individuals through Lot 1 UKRS, so this impact should be minimal. The greater risk is with Lot 2 – HfU as we don't have 'control' (through planned pledges) of how many arrivals there will be, so the approach is more one of accurate and timely sharing of data, and partnership working. There is a weekly sharing of arrivals data with the school admissions team. There is a wider partnership group in place that includes healthcare colleagues. Lot 3 Afghan resettlement has minimal impact as we have already resettled and found places for the children who have arrived. There may be no further arrivals, or a further 5 individuals, which will have minimal impact on services. However, with all the above schemes, external factors could result in more arrivals.
- 4.9 There is a risk of not being able to source enough properties for Lot 1. We will work closely with housing association partners and private rented sector landlords. Where social rented properties are sourced, these will tend to be two bed flats, which are in the greatest supply/lowest demand.
- 4.10 The risk of challenge to the award of the contracts is low, given that it has been procured in accordance with the Council's Financial and Contract Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015).

Financial implications

- 4.11 Lot 1 UKRS is currently estimated to support 20 individuals over the contract term, but external factors may result in a future significant increase in the number of households requiring support, and for varying periods of time. Therefore prices have been provided on a per person per month unit cost basis. Details of the unit costs are included in the accompanying private session report. Lot 1 UKRS is fully funded by central Government UKRS tariff of total of £20,520 per individual over 5 years, including any additional households that may become part of this scheme in future.
- 4.12 Lot 2 HfU is currently scheduled to support the 50 existing HfU individuals over the contract term, however there is a significant likelihood that this number will increase. Therefore prices have been provided on a per person per month unit cost basis. Details of the unit costs are included in the accompanying private session report. Lot 2 HfU is fully funded by central Government HfU tariff of total of £10,500 per individual over 1 year, including any additional households that may become part of this scheme in future.
- 4.13 Lot 3 Afghan Resettlement is scheduled to support the existing 115 individuals over the contract term, however this number may increase during the contract term. Therefore prices have been provided on a per person per month unit cost basis. Details of the unit costs are included in the accompanying private session report. Lot 3 Afghan Resettlement is fully funded by central Government ARAP and ACRS tariffs of total of £20,520 per individual over 3 years, including any

additional households that may become part of this scheme in future.

Legal implications

- 4.14 The Directorate, in consultation with Legal Services, has elected to use the Council's long form contract for goods and services. This has been modified as required by Legal Services to fit the tender proposals and ensure the contract is sufficiently robust, as well as to promote best value and ensure the Council's best interests are fully protected. This is in accordance with the Council's Contract Rules and the PCR 2015. No legal implications have been identified during the tender processes that are not already thoroughly addressed in the proposed forms of contract.
- 4.15 During the tender processes no tenderers raised queries about or requests for changes to the Council's preferred form of contract.

Procurement /Social Value

- 4.16 The contracts have been tendered in compliance with the Council's Contract Rules and the PCR 2015 using an open tender process which enabled local providers to bid for the contracts.
- 4.17 The Social Value element resulted in measurable benefits for Walsall as part of contract delivery. These should be reviewed and monitored by the Directorate.
- 4.18 Procurement input has ensured the conduct of a compliant procurement process.
- 4.19 A public advertisement was placed on the Council's e-tendering portal 'Intend' and published on Contracts Finder and on the Find a Tender Service, on 14 July 2022 and closed on 15 August 2022. An Open Procedure Procurement Process was used to invite tenders.
- 4.20 There were 39 expressions of interest and accessed the documentation with 6 suppliers submitting a response. The anticipated contract commencement dates are 1 December 2022. Each contract has an option to extend for up to a further 24 months at the Council's sole discretion.
- 4.21 The tenders were all evaluated using 90% quality and 10% price split due to the significant focus on quality of support
- 4.22 Tenders were opened on 15th August by Sally Rowe – Executive Director of Children Services and Stephanie Westley, Procurement Officer, using a formal opening ceremony on the in-tend e-tendering portal. The Council received tenders as set out below:

Lot 1 - UKRS

Tenderer	Location – Registered Office
Absolute Interpreting and Translations Ltd and Great Health Care In the Community	Birmingham
Migrant Helpline T/A Migrant Centre	London

Nash Dom CIC	Walsall
The Refugee and Migrant Centre Limited	Wolverhampton

Lot 2 - HfU

Tenderer	Location – Registered Office
Absolute Interpreting and Translations Ltd and Great Health Care In the Community	Birmingham
Ashley Community & Housing Ltd	Bristol
Migrant Helpline T/A Migrant Centre	London
Nash Dom CIC	Walsall
The Refugee and Migrant Centre Limited	Wolverhampton

Lot 3 – Afghan Resettlement schemes

Tenderer	Location – Registered Office
Absolute Interpreting and Translations Ltd and Great Health Care In the Community	Birmingham
Afghan Community and Welfare Centre	Walsall
Ashley Community & Housing Ltd	Bristol
Migrant Helpline T/A Migrant Centre	London
The Refugee and Migrant Centre Limited	Wolverhampton

Tender Evaluation Process

4.23 The tenders were evaluated by a panel of officers in accordance with the Weighted Non-Price Criteria published in the ITT as shown in the table below:

Lot 1 – UK Resettlement Scheme

Criteria	Page Limit	Percentage Weighting
Social Value (all lots)	1 Page A4	5%
Knowledge and Experience (all lots)	2 Pages A4	15%
Challenges facing refugees/Skills (all lots)	2 Pages A4	15%
Delivery of Specification (all lots)	2 Pages A4	20%
Key Risks and Mitigation (all lots)	2 Pages A4	15%
Exit Strategy (all lots)	1 Page A4	10%
Dealing with rapid and significant demand (lot 1 only)	1 Page A4	10%
Total		90%

Lot 2 – Ukraine Resettlement Scheme

Criteria	Page Limit	Percentage Weighting
Social Value (all lots)	1 Page A4	5%
Knowledge and Experience (all lots)	2 Pages A4	15%
Challenges facing refugees/Skills (all lots)	2 Pages A4	15%
Delivery of Specification (all lots)	2 Pages A4	20%
Key Risks and Mitigation (all lots)	2 Pages A4	15%
Exit Strategy (all lots)	1 Page A4	10%
Tailored Ukrainian Service (lot 2 only)	1 Page A4	10%

Lot 3 – Afghan Resettlement Scheme

Criteria	Page Limit	Percentage Weighting
Social Value (all lots)	1 Page A4	5%
Knowledge and Experience (all lots)	2 Pages A4	15%
Challenges facing refugees/Skills (all lots)	2 Pages A4	15%
Delivery of Specification (all lots)	2 Pages A4	20%
Key Risks and Mitigation (all lots)	2 Pages A4	15%
Exit Strategy (all lots)	1 Page A4	10%
Tailored Afghan Service (lot 3 only)	1 Page A4	10%
Total		90%

Tender Outcome

4.24 A moderation meeting was held to agree a moderated final score for each tender and the results were:

- The Refugee and Migrant Centre Limited achieved the highest scores overall for LOT 1
- The Refugee and Migrant Centre Limited achieved the highest scores overall for LOT 2
- The Refugee and Migrant Centre Limited achieved the highest scores overall for LOT 3

Property implications

4.25 There are no direct property implications for the Council.

Health and wellbeing implications

4.26 The health and wellbeing prospects for these families and their children will potentially be much improved by relocation to Walsall. National research has demonstrated many refugees have been faced with health inequalities and can often be subjected to mental health issues. Therefore the support for these households will need to ensure pathways are in place into health services and appropriate outcomes are achieved.

Staffing implications

- 4.27 MHJ officers will monitor and manage the contracts. There are no other direct staffing implications for the Council as all staff engaged in providing the relevant services will be employed by the provider.

Reducing Inequalities

- 4.28 The implications for reducing inequalities have been taken into account and assessed as set out in a detailed Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) at **Appendix A**.
- 4.29 The UNHCR convention states key categories refugee communities fall into including child sex exploitation, victims of modern slavery and those subject to legal and protection issues, which indicate by the nature of these categories the client groups have vulnerabilities. The refugee communities are often subjected to greater levels of mental health issues, health inequalities, lower literacy rates and will often be larger families who are disproportionately affected by welfare regulations. As communities the need for a holistic level of integration and help towards areas such as accessing and navigating health and education services is important.

Climate Change

- 4.30 There are no specific climate change implications contained within this report.

Consultation

- 4.31 Consultation has been carried out with existing service users through a focus group with Ukrainians under the HfU scheme and those welcomed through the Afghan Resettlement Schemes. The customers taking part in the sessions highlighted the importance of having constructive support, being able to fully understand their rights and responsibilities, support for accessing services which was consistent and help with achieving aspirations such as through employment.

5. Decide

- 5.1 A 'do nothing' option is not viable as the refugees are already settled in Walsall, with more to follow (with a particular likelihood of increase in Ukrainian numbers), and require a continuation of the integration support proposed. In relation to Lot 2 HfU, the Council is required by central government to provide a support service to Ukrainian refugees arriving through this scheme.
- 5.2 It is proposed that Cabinet approve the contract awards.

6. Respond

If approved, contracts will be entered into, and service implementation planning with the providers will commence.

7. Review

The outcomes of the services will be regularly monitored through Money Home Job Performance frameworks

Background papers

- UKRS Funding Instruction - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-resettlement-programmes-funding-instruction-2021-to-2022/funding-instruction-for-local-authorities-in-support-of-the-united-kingdoms-resettlement-schemes-2021-to-2022-accessible-version#part-1---year-1-statement-of-outcomes>
- Homes for Ukraine grant determination - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homes-for-ukraine-funding-march-to-may-2022/homes-for-ukraine-2022-23-local-authority-tariff-payment-grant-determination-no316206#:~:text=The%20purpose%20of%20the%20Homes,and%20fully%20integrate%20into%20communities.>
- ACRS and ARAP Funding Instruction - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocation-and-assistance-funding-instruction/funding-instruction-for-local-authorities-in-the-support-of-the-afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme-and-afghan-relocation-and-assistance-policy-22-ju#part-1--year-1-statement-of-outcomes>

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