

# Mid Devon District Council

## Homes

Tuesday, 13 September 2016 at 2.15 pm  
Exe Room, Phoenix House, Tiverton

Next ordinary meeting  
Tuesday, 15 November 2016 at 2.15 pm

Those attending are advised that this meeting will be recorded

## Membership

Cllr Mrs E M Andrews  
Cllr Mrs H Bainbridge  
Cllr D R Coren  
Cllr W J Daw  
Cllr Mrs G Doe  
Cllr R J Dolley  
Cllr P J Heal (Chairman)  
Cllr J D Squire  
Cllr L D Taylor

## A G E N D A

*Members are reminded of the need to make declarations of interest prior to any discussion which may take place*

### 1      **Apologies and Substitute Members**

To receive any apologies for absence and notice of appointment of substitutes.

### 2      **Public Question Time**

To receive any questions relating to items on the Agenda from members of the public and replies thereto.

### 3      **Minutes** (*Pages 7 - 12*)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2016 (copy attached).

### 4      **Chairman's Announcements**

To receive any announcements that the Chairman may wish to make.

**Motion 527 (Councillors Mrs J Binks, Mrs J Roach, Mrs N Woollatt and R Wright) (Pages 13 - 18)**

To consider the following Motion referred by the Council to the Housing Policy Development Group:

“That this Council supports the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme as detailed below and commits to working with the private sector to achieve placements.”

The Scheme has been developed since September 2015 having evolved from a number of earlier Gateway Scheme. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will refer people to the scheme, based on a criteria set by the UK. This currently prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin: women, children and young people at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence, refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs; refugees with medical needs or disabilities; persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity; and refugees with family links in resettlement countries. Most beneficiaries of the scheme will currently be living in Turkey, Jordan and Syria, though not all in designated refugee camps.

The UNHCR conducts a series of checks including a robust identification process prior to referring a refugee to the UK Scheme. Referrals are then further screened and considered by the Home Office for suitability for entry to the UK. The Home Office checks that they meet eligibility criteria and carries out medical and security checks.

By the time a UNHCR referred refugee arrives in the UK they have been through a thorough two stage vetting process to ensure government knows who is entering the country. This includes the taking of biometrics, documentary evidence and interviews.

**What this means in practice** – Local authorities can choose whether to participate in the scheme. Participating Local Authorities pass offers of suitable accommodation to the Home Office who then match available accommodation to a refugee family. Case information is exchanged including details of family make up, age and specific needs. The Local Authority is asked to confirm whether it can accommodate and support those specific cases, having consulted key local agencies.

On accepting to arrange resettlement, local authorities then need to co-ordinate activity to ensure that provision and support needed under the terms of the scheme is available and ready to access. Refugees will be granted a five year humanitarian protection visa. Refugees will have a National Insurance number, access to UK benefits and the right to work. Housing benefit will fund accommodation costs initially.

We would expect that in the vast majority of cases refugees will want to stay in the area of the UK in which they have been resettled. However refugees are free to move elsewhere in the UK if they choose. If a refugee and their family wish to move to another part of the UK after

their initial arrival, under the terms of the scheme, they will no longer be entitled to accommodation that had been allocated and they will no longer have resettlement support in the authority in which they were first placed. The scheme will continue to run alongside other resettlement schemes and other asylum procedures.

The scheme depends on finding suitable accommodation that is aligned to the current requirements of local housing authorities and that can be paid for initially through existing housing benefit allocation. The scheme sets out to resettle refugees not simply to shelter them. Accommodation must be suitable for families to live safe, independent and productive lives, just as local authorities would aim to provide for any homeless family.

Clearly housing costs and availability varies considerably across the County and whilst there is capacity in most parts of the County to support resettlement, this has to be aligned to affordable and available accommodation. Whilst some very rural parts of Devon may provide suitable accommodation opportunities, this needs to be balanced with meeting the anticipated wider needs of resettled refugees, i.e. access to schools, healthcare, cultural, religious and support networks as required alongside opportunities for employment.

The County Council recognises that expertise of supporting refugees (alongside those seeking asylum and dealing with wider migration issues) largely sits in other organisations, largely within the voluntary and community sector. It is therefore the intention to support a number of voluntary and community sector organisations to deliver much of the Syrian Scheme on behalf of the wider partnership. Refugee Support Devon will be playing a leading and significant part in this, but it is anticipated that other groups may also be able to take a role at a community level as resettlement develops across the County.

Until families have begun to be safely and successfully resettled, we do not intend to make public announcements with regards to the arrival date or destination of refugee families.

Accommodation continues to be difficult to source locally and there are concerns that commitments from local Housing Authorities (currently to resettle up to 70 families over the course of the scheme) will not be met as a result. We will soon commission a short film and publicity aimed at local current and potential landlords to highlight the Scheme and its opportunities for them and the wider community.

***Please note: Having considered the above Motion and the briefing paper attached the Policy Development Group are asked to consider whether this Motion should either be supported or rejected. The decision will be referred back to full Council on 26 October 2016.***

6      **Financial update for the three months to 30 June 2016** *(Pages 19 - 36)*

To receive a report from the Head of Finance presenting a financial update in respect of the income and expenditure so far in the year.

7      **Performance and Risk for the first quarter of 2016-17** *(Pages 37 - 46)*

To receive a report from the Head of Communities and Governance providing Members with an update on performance against the Corporate and local service targets for 2016/17 as well as providing an update on any key risks.

**Please note: If Members have questions regarding this report please submit them to the clerk in advance of the meeting so that the appropriate officer can be asked to attend or provide a written response.**

8      **Service Standards Review** *(Pages 47 - 64)*

To receive a report from the Housing Services Manager reviewing the departments' Service Standards.

9      **Aids and Adaptations Policy** *(Pages 65 - 76)*

To receive a report from the Building Services Manager reviewing the Aids and Adaptations Policy.

10     **Introductory Tenancy Policy** *(Pages 77 - 86)*

To receive a report from the Housing Services Manager reviewing the Introductory Tenancy Policy.

11     **Pay to Stay** *(Pages 87 - 92)*

To receive a briefing paper from the Housing Services Manager regarding 'Pay to Stay' also known as the High Income Social Tenant Policy.

12     **Identification of items for the next meeting**

Members are asked to note that the following items are already identified in the work programme for the next meeting:

- Financial Monitoring for the 6 months to September 2016
- Performance and Risk for quarter two
- Supply and Demand Policy
- Decant Policy

- Future Plans for social housing

Note: This item is limited to 10 minutes. There should be no discussion on the items raised.

**Stephen Walford**

Chief Executive

Monday, 5 September 2016

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Members of the public may also use other forms of social media to report on proceedings at this meeting.

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to discussion. Lift access the first floor of the building is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available. There is time set aside at the beginning of the meeting to allow the public to ask questions.

An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. If you require any further information, or if you would like a copy of the Agenda in another format (for example in large print) please contact Sarah Lees on:

Tel: 01884 234310

E-Mail: [slees@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:slees@middevon.gov.uk)

Public Wi-Fi is available in all meeting rooms.