

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE BOARD 26 APRIL 2022

### UPDATE ON THE WORCESTERSHIRE RESPONSE TO INVASION OF UKRAINE

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#### Summary

1. The Board is asked to consider the update provided in respect of Worcestershire's Response to the invasion of Ukraine.
2. The Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and Assistant Director for Communities have been invited to the meeting for the discussion.

#### Background

3. At its last meeting on 23 March, the Board considered the 24 March Cabinet Report about the Worcestershire Response to the Invasion of Ukraine.
4. The Chairman of the Board attended Cabinet on 24 March to present the Board's comments (attached at Appendix 1).
5. At the 24 March meeting, **Cabinet:**
  - a) **Endorsed the joint 'One Worcestershire' approach to support Ukraine and the Ukrainian people following agreement between the County Council and six District Councils to work together and co-ordinate response;**
  - b) **Approved its participation in the Ukraine Family Scheme and Local Sponsorship Scheme;**
  - c) **Agreed that the Council uses its resources to help the co-ordination of efforts across the County and to work with voluntary and community groups to support local community response; and**
  - d) **Noted the work being done to review existing contracts and investments with our intention to immediately suspend any further investments in Russia and Belarus and review our approach to exit from all of the investments in Russia and Belarus.**

#### Progress

6. The County Council, District Councils and partners have unanimously pledged to do all they can to support families and individuals arriving in Worcestershire from Ukraine as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and the Ukraine Family Scheme.

7. People arriving from Ukraine will be able to:

- Live and work in the UK for up to three years
- Access healthcare, benefits, employment support, education, and English language tuition.

8. Most of them will be women and children and older people, as able-bodied men aged 18 to 60 are not generally being allowed to leave Ukraine at present.

## **Sponsors and Ukrainian Guests**

9. The UK has seen a surge of support for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and central Government have been working to gather the data on those who have registered and matching families in order to disseminate the information to local authorities. With over 150,000 people across the UK applying in the first few days, it has taken some time for Government to work through the detail and then cascade information on approved visa applications to Local Authorities.

10. Worcestershire had its first data transfer on Tuesday 22 March 2022, the system is updated daily with new sponsors and guests as and when a match has happened. Current information suggests the following breakdown for Sponsors and Guests across Districts (as of 11 April 2022). This is all subject to change as the process of welcoming Guests to the County is progressed

### **11. Data as at 11/04/2022 inc. number of children split by school stage**

District	No of Host Properties	No of Guests	No of Children by Age Band		
			0-4	5-11	12-18
<b>Bromsgrove</b>	26	62	4	8	13
<b>Malvern</b>	57	147	14	31	21
<b>Redditch</b>	11	25	2	7	2
<b>Worcester</b>	36	80	3	17	13
<b>Wychavon</b>	80	202	15	33	36
<b>Wyre Forest</b>	20	49	6	8	5
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>565</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>90</b>

12. The information on sponsors and guests is shared across County and District colleagues daily. This is currently a manual process as the County Council has been the only authority with access to the live data. This has since been challenged and District Councils will be able to sign up to access the central government system in order to access data directly.

13. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) are expecting Local Authorities to upload information back to the central system on the five expected checks. Discussions are taking place on how best to update this system. The five checks are:

- I have checked the accommodation exists and can be used as residential accommodation

- I have visited the accommodation and it appears suitable for the proposed guests
- I have initiated Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks
- I have confirmed that the guest(s) has/have arrived in the accommodation
- I have completed safeguarding checks, including visiting the guests in their accommodation and can confirm there are no serious concerns

14. In addition, a local system to Worcestershire has been developed to record activity and actions taken by District and County Councils. This local system will also record information about other members of the sponsors households and whether accommodation, DBS and safeguarding checks have been initiated and completed. This system was shared with Districts, following the signing of an information sharing agreement, during the week commencing 4 April 2022.

## Funding

15. The Home for Ukraine Scheme does attract additional funding. £350 per month has been offered to sponsors for up to 12 months (6-month period is the minimum expectation set for sponsors). This “thank you” payment won’t affect any benefit claims sponsors currently have. Sponsors are required to provide suitable accommodation for a minimum of six months; facilitate the guest’s arrival to the UK including transfer to accommodation and signpost their guest to public services (e.g. registering at a GP).

16. £10,500 per person will be provided to Local Authorities accepted under this scheme. There is a top up for education for children aged 2 to 18. The £10,500 payment is the figure for the first year. Details of payments for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years are awaited. The funding is “to provide much wider support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities”.

17. The County and District Leaders agreed at their meeting on the 21 March 2022 to treat this funding as a pool, under the joint control of officers from the seven councils. The County Council will use their allocation to fund the DBS Checks, Adult Learning, Co-ordination costs, social care contributions, transport, Here2Help etc. District Councils will use their allocations to fund accommodation checks, the immediate welfare payment of £200 per guest, other welfare support if required, community engagement (potential with a direct employment of a guest), housing requirements etc.

## Guidance

18. DLUHC updated the [guidance](#) on the 30 March for councils on the Homes for Ukraine scheme which outlines the role of councils in England in supporting the scheme. The [guidance](#) has some minor changes throughout, although these updates have had little impact on the work already commenced in Worcestershire.

## The Welcoming Process

19. The following actions have been taken:

- District Councils have commenced undertaking accommodation checks. A checklist is being used by Districts within their visits to ensure consistency of approach. This checklist is being kept up to date considering any more detailed expectations from central government.
- District Councils have also confirmed arrangements for making immediate welfare payment of £200 per guest as well as setting up the monthly £350 'thank you' payments for Sponsors.
- The DBS checking process has also commenced. Worcestershire County Council will carry out enhanced DBS checks on all 16+ in sponsors households where the Ukrainian Guest group includes an under 18-year-old. All lead Sponsors have been contacted and been invited to attend ID check drop ins at local libraries. Here2Help advisors, Library Staff and Worcestershire County Council's DBS Team are working together to process all of these and to manage any exceptions to this approach.
- For adult only Ukrainian groups a basic DBS check is carried out on sponsors. Sponsors apply directly through [Request a basic DBS check - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk). On receipt of their DBS certificate, sponsors are being asked to arrange to share these with Here2help advisors/ Worcestershire County Council's DBS Team so they can be verified. Sponsors are able to claim the costs of this back from the Council.
- An initial check of date of births of Guests is being carried out to ascertain whether there are any unaccompanied under 18-year-olds travelling to the UK who will require Children's Social Care intervention. Where this may be the case, contact is being made with the Sponsor to confirm the information and if the under 18 is unaccompanied a referral to Children's Social Care is being made. **(Currently 8 examples)**. DLUHC/HO confirmed on webinar on 31 March that it should not be possible for a sponsor to match with unaccompanied under 18s, but the experience in Worcestershire and in some other areas is that unaccompanied under 18s are arriving. One possible explanation is that the sponsor is matched with a family group but, once visas are issued, there is nothing to prevent individuals within the group travelling. Another explanation may be that there are weaknesses in the application system e.g. that individuals can misstate their age. Local examples are being shared with central government so this can be managed.
- Cultural awareness – within Worcestershire County Council's Adult Learning Team there is a Russian Volunteer, a Ukrainian Volunteer, and a Belarussian member of staff. Between them they are going to co-deliver sessions for Officers (Districts, County Council, wider partners inc. schools) on cultural awareness. It will also be offered to Sponsors as well. The content includes:
  - A little bit of cultural history and the shared culture across Eastern Europe (reinforce unity among people and start to describe the Eastern European community in Worcestershire – community groups, shops, places of worship – whatever can be identified in the timeframe)
  - Something about food – suggested common ingredients that hosts could stock in their cupboard initially and/or a simple recipe that could be made as a welcoming sentiment

- Cultural awareness and politeness – for example, Eastern European cultures don't overly use please and thank you; this can be misinterpreted as rudeness
- Basic language awareness and greetings – a few simple words like “hello”, “my name is...”, “are you hungry?”, “this”, “that”
- A checklist to conduct Safeguarding/Welfare visits when Guests arrive. This will include confirming general information, but also education, language, skills, health requirements and ascertain any additional support they may need in terms of donations from residents and businesses for example clothing and toys.
- Welcome packs are being collated for Guests and Sponsors that contain a wide range of useful local information provided by District colleagues in addition to information provided by the County Council and other partners.
- Information is being gathered of local support, in addition to the support given by the County Council and its partners, that may be available for when the Guests arrive. The already well established [Here2Help service](#) is being utilised to organise and link up those wishing to offer help (individuals and organisations/community groups etc) to those who may need help or advice. Communications have been published encouraging anyone who feels they are able to support in any way to go through Here2Help to register.
- H2H will also become the hub for info when families start to arrive and therefore details of how to access will be included in welcome packs.
- A 'Call-out' has been issued to specifically ask individuals, organisations or services who are in a position to provide practical/emotional support and translation support and are not already registered on the Community Services directory, to register online as soon as possible
- The County Council libraries in each district have also become hubs for residents to find trusted information about how they can help, access information (online access is free and so is access to 100's of usually paid for publications) and will also be locations where Ukrainian families can meet and use our services and we have increased our stock of books that will be useful for our Ukrainian guests.

## **Purpose of the Meeting**

20. Members of the Board are asked to consider the update, provide comments to the Leader and determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny.

## **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 - Report from Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board to Cabinet 24 March 2022 Worcestershire Response to Invasion of Ukraine – Scrutiny comments

## **Contact Point**

Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Manager, Tel: 01905 844963  
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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

24 March 2022 [Cabinet](#) Report -Worcestershire Response to Invasion of Ukraine

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