

FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	16 th September 2015
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Service Area	Housing & Community Safety
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	23 rd September 2015

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

To agree in principle to support the SVPRS and to propose a proportionate response to the Syrian refugee crisis, following a direct request to all local authorities in Wales, by Welsh Government, to consider participation in the resettling of Syrian refugees within Welsh local authorities.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Prime Minister announced on Monday the UK will take up to 20,000 refugees during the life of this Parliament (by 2020)
- 1.2 It is highly likely that this will mean scaling up the current SVPRS with approximately 400 people per month arriving across the UK. The aim is for stable patterns of arrivals over the next few years
- 1.3 It is anticipated that funding for the costs of resettlement in the first year (housing, education etc) will be met by the Home Office and funding packages will be negotiated on a case by case basis (due to differing needs of the refugees) but we await further detail on this

1.4 Given the PM's speech (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/syria-refugees-and-counter-terrorism-prime-ministers-statement>) the cohort of those to be given sanctuary will change slightly with an increased focus on unaccompanied minors.

1.5 The Scheme is flexible and voluntary.

2.0 WELSH GOVERNMENT & MTCBC RESPONSE

2.1 A summit was called by Welsh Government for Thursday, 17th September 2015 to consider the response of the Welsh Government and local government partners to the humanitarian crisis.

2.2 The WLGA attended the said summit to represent the interests of local government in Wales.

2.3 Prior to the summit the Council was asked to respond to two fundamental questions:

(i) In principle, is your authority willing to participate in receiving and resettling Syrian refugees?

(ii) If so, (and on the basis of no commitments and in confidence), do you have indicative figures on how many people/families your authority may be able to receive.

2.4 Due to the very short timescales in which to respond, a short sharp consultation exercise was undertaken with some key internal and external partners including – the four local Registered Social Landlords (to consider housing implications), Education Department, Social Services Department etc., all of whom responded that they would like to assist in principle, subject to appropriate resources being made available to facilitate this potentially onerous undertaking.

2.5 MTCBC duly responded to the WLGA request (2 questions above) with the following:

(i) Yes

(ii) 39 potentially available as and when required.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

3.1 Discussions between Welsh Government and Home Office are at an early stage, with no details emerging as yet.

4.0 SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SUMMARY

- 4.1 The Single Integrated Plan and Sustainability Impact Summary has identified the following possible positive impact/opportunities; people, who live and work in Merthyr Tydfil are supported to enjoy a healthier and better quality of life; people enjoy a vibrant, attractive, safe and sustainable place in which to live, work, play and visit; poverty - preventing poverty, helping people out of poverty and mitigating the impact of poverty; working with Communities - The role of communities working in partnership to help to deliver the Vision and Priority Outcomes for Merthyr Tydfil.
- 4.2 The assessment further identified the following possible negative impact/threats; people in Merthyr Tydfil have the opportunity and aspiration to learn and develop their skills to maximise their potential; Equal Opportunities – ending discrimination, ensuring equality of opportunity and that all parts of our population can live together, where every person has an equal chance to participate and has equal access to services and Social Inclusion - ensuring that no-one is disadvantaged because of poverty, geography or access to services.

5.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full assessment is not required at this time. The form can be accessed on the Council's website/intranet via the 'Equality Impact Assessment' link.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that

- 6.1 The Council provide full in principle support to assisting the resettlement of Syrian refugees, providing appropriate and adequate resources are provided to assist in this matter.
- 6.2 A report to be brought back to Council when full financial implications are known after the meeting with the WLGA.

ELLIS COOPER
CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PLACE AND TRANSFORMATION)

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.