

CABINET MEMBER DECISION REPORT FORM

(NB. all decisions should comply with Article 13.2 of the constitution)

1. Decision made

To authorise up to 15 x 2 bedroom family flats and up to 5 x 1 bedroom sheltered housing flats, all Cheltenham Borough Council owned, to be used each year over the next 5 years for the rehousing of Syrian refugees.

2. Identity of the Decision Maker

Cabinet Member Housing, Councillor Peter Jeffries.

3. Date of Decision

7.12.15

4. Reasons for Decision

In the wake of the Syrian Refugee Crisis the Government has agreed rehouse up to 20,000 Syrian Refugees over the next 5 years.

In order to support this initiative Cheltenham Borough Council has agreed to work with Gloucestershire County Council and other District Authorities in the county to rehouse a number of Syrian Refugees.

In considering how many Syrian refugees Cheltenham Borough Council can assist, the authority has had regard to local needs and in particular any potential impact on homelessness that may come about as a result of accommodating refugees within our social housing stock. The authority has also taken into account the type of accommodation that becomes available and has ruled out using accommodation which is in greatest demand from local residents.

Having consulted with Cheltenham Borough Homes' Housing Options and Lettings Teams, the authority has concluded that it can accommodate up to 15 Syrian Refugee families/year in 2 bedroom 4 person flats and up to a further 5 Syrian Refugee households/year in 1 bedroom sheltered accommodation, if required.

The authority will however also look to the private rented market to assist in meeting this commitment. It will seek to do this via Chapter One, a Registered Provider that leases private rented accommodation from private landlords throughout the county.

The authority will commit to this rehousing arrangement for the next 5 years, subject to reasonably incurred housing costs being met by the County Council.

5. Alternative options considered and rejected

The Authority has considered the use of the private rented sector to assist in the rehousing of Syrian refugees. This has not been ruled out, but the accommodation needs to be well managed given the

vulnerability of these refugees.

Chapter One is a Registered Provider that offers a private leasing scheme to landlords in the private rented sector. We are keen for Chapter One to support the authority in helping to meet our commitment to house Syrian refugees in Cheltenham. However market conditions are such that whilst Chapter One has had some notable success in acquiring private rented accommodation in Gloucester and in other areas of the county, they have been relatively less successful in leasing accommodation in Cheltenham. It is therefore reasonable to expect relatively limited assistance from Chapter One in Cheltenham.

The Authority has also contacted all Registered Providers with accommodation in the area, and a number of Registered Providers are open to providing assistance. The turnover of other RP accommodation is however less predictable and often more popular (because family accommodation are more often houses than flats) so again the use of this option whilst not ruled out may be limited.

6. Background documents

None

7. Any Consultation undertaken

There has been extensive consultation with Cheltenham Borough Homes who share the authority's view that the number of Syrian refugees the authority is committed to assist each year will be manageable and is unlikely to have a detrimental impact on homelessness within the town. The type of dwellings we have chosen to use for these Syrian refugees is also supported.

Cheltenham's Positive Participation Partnership, a partnership made up of representatives of the voluntary and statutory sector within the town were also informed of our intentions to assist a manageable number of Syrian Refugees in the way of rehousing, and this support was welcomed by the Partnership.

8. Results of consultation (where undertaken)

As detailed in Section 7 above.

9. Any Conflict of Interest declared by an Executive Member who is consulted on the decision

None

10. Dispensation

Was a dispensation given by the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) to Cabinet Members to participate in consultation on officer (or Cabinet Member) executive decisions where they have a conflict of interest in respect of any declaration of interest listed at 9 ?

Date of dispensation Yes N/A

11. Supporting Report

Final report attached ? Yes No

12. Confidential or Exempt Information

Confidential or Exempt information ? Yes No

Name of document(s) which are confidential or exempt...

Signature.....

Date.....