

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet Member Decision

Decision to make a minimum pledge to house refugees coming through the government's safe route mechanisms in response to the recent Home Office Consultation for a Cap

08.12.23

Accountable member:

Councillor Victoria Atherstone, Cabinet Member for Housing

Accountable officer:

Martin Stacy, Housing Strategy & Partnerships Manager

Ward(s) affected:

Any ward could be affected (All Wards)

Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

Decision:

To make a pledge to accommodate a minimum of 3 families within Cheltenham Borough Council owned homes (these will be 2 x two-bedroom properties and 1 x one-bedroom property) during 2025, and to make this commitment via the government's 'Safe Routes – The National Cap 2025 Consultation.' (The cap will not commence until 2025.)

Reasons for the decision:

Cheltenham is a 'Town of Sanctuary' welcoming refugees and asylum seekers from across the world and offering places of safety to people who flee violence.

The Home Office recently launched a consultation to inform the level at which the cap on safe and legal routes is set. Local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, and the Executive Office in Northern Ireland are being consulted.

The consultation is an opportunity for authorities to assess their capacity to support vulnerable people moving forward and inform decision making at Government level.

The objective of the cap is to ensure the UK can accommodate and support those arriving through safe and legal routes effectively. The introduction of the cap provides an opportunity for a more sustainable and managed approach to migration through humanitarian safe and legal routes. Recognising the pressures placed on local authority capacity to accommodate and effectively integrate those arriving, the cap will place a realistic annual limit on the number of people who can come to the UK each year through safe and legal routes. The annual cap will reflect local authority capacity.

Cheltenham Borough Council has engaged with Community Sponsorship representatives and Third Sector Organisations who provide accommodation in their local areas, and local service providers including Integrated Care Boards. In matters of urgency (such as to allow a national response to an international emergency), the Home Secretary will be able to seek Parliament's approval to change the number without the consultation process. As the cap is annual to reflect the fluctuating nature of capacity, there is scope to change it in future years.

The UK currently operates seven safe and legal routes. These include resettlement schemes such as the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and Community Sponsorship, as well as bespoke routes for individuals from Afghanistan, Ukraine, Hong Kong, and the close family members of refugees. Under the UK's safe and legal routes, eligible individuals access them through an application or referral process made overseas. This means when they arrive in the UK their status is already determined.

- The cap includes the following routes: Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) pathways 2 and 3 (stage 2), UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and Community Sponsorship
- The cap will not commence until 2025

Alternative options:

None considered. The consultation is an important opportunity for Cheltenham Borough Council to respond to the Home Office consultation with an achievable number to ensure this can be delivered. The Home Office will closely monitor the scheme and will hold all Local Authorities to the pledges submitted.

Consultation and feedback:

The consultation was held in partnership with the Gloucestershire Strategic Migration Partnership, Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (service provider), Gloucestershire ICB, Gloucestershire Partnership International Resettlement Co-ordinator and resettlement leads from across refugee and asylum seeker routes in Gloucestershire, Housing Leads and the County Council.

Cheltenham Borough Homes (Housing Options Service) and Cheltenham Welcomes Refugees (Community Sponsorship Group) were also consulted.

The feedback helped determine the capacity to house and support those coming through safe legal routes and provided evidence to demonstrate the current demand in conjunction with availability for social housing in Cheltenham.

Background information:

[Government Consultation on Safe and Legal Routes for Refugees](#)

Letter from the Minister of State for Immigration



Letter from the
Minister of State for Ir

Cap on Safe and Legal Routes – Consultation Response Form



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routes - consultation r

Cap on Safe and Legal Routes



Cap on safe and legal
routes - Consultation

Cap on Safe and Legal Routes – FAQ's



Cap on safe and legal
routes FAQs.pdf

Cheltenham Borough Council – Motion for Town of Sanctuary

Interests declared:

None.

Signed:

N Atkinson

Date: 8th Dec 2023