



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Ukraine Refugee Scheme</b>
<b>Date:</b>	25th March, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Kevin Heaney, Portfolio Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To update the Committee on the emerging plans to implement the local response to the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme, which allows UK individuals, charities, community groups and businesses to record their interest in supporting Ukrainians fleeing the war.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the work that is ongoing with The Executive Office, DfC, NIHE and across Local Government to plan for local responses to the Ukrainian Refugee Scheme, which was launched on 14th March; and</li><li>that this work is progressing at pace, and it may be necessary for the Chief Executive to quickly assign Council resources to the emerging scheme using his delegated authority.</li></ul>

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	On 14th March, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove launched the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme, which allows UK individuals, charities, community groups and businesses to record their interest in supporting Ukrainians fleeing the war.
3.2	The Homes for Ukraine scheme will allow individuals, charities, community groups and businesses in the UK to bring Ukrainians to safety, including those with no family ties to the UK. Phase One of the scheme will allow sponsors in the UK to nominate a named Ukrainian or a named Ukrainian family to stay with them in their home or in a separate property. The scheme uses a webpage for sponsors to record their interest, with the scheme opening for applications on 18th March.
3.3	The scheme will operate in Northern Ireland and The Executive Office (TEO) plans to strongly encourage expressions of interest in the provision of accommodation from both individuals and organisations. Whilst not all the details have yet been announced by Westminster, TEO is working at pace, making preparations so they can provide sanctuary to Ukrainian refugees.
3.4	Mindful of the pressure on social housing stock, TEO officials are engaging with councils and the voluntary and community sector to find creative ways of bringing suitable accommodation into use and identifying all available capacity. TEO is also in close contact with the Home Office and the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing and with colleagues in other jurisdictions.
3.5	<p><u>Indicative areas of focus for Local Government</u></p> <p>TEO has stated that partnership working will be central to making the best of this scheme and to maximise the positive impact for refugees more generally. TEO has met with SOLACE and NILGA to identify how a co-design approach might be taken.</p>
3.6	<p>The indicative workstreams that will involve Local Government are likely to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible design and delivery of Welcome Centres in their local areas, in partnership with public sector organisations and community and voluntary sector. This will include orientation centres, as well as centres with accommodation for short stays. NIHE is also looking at the option of a single regional Welcome Centre.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of local knowledge and information to inform the capacity exercise being led by NI Housing Executive as well as on an ongoing basis.</li> <li>• Communications in liaison with a central comms team that will be established by TEO with Council colleagues.</li> </ul> <p><u>Next Steps</u></p> <p>3.7 Further co-design meetings will be arranged with agreed points of contacts for each council and there will be further meetings with TEO, DfC and others commencing as soon as possible. SOLACE is represented on the Strategic Planning Group (SPG) chaired by TEO and BCC is represented on the regional planning group for local government. A central comms working group has also been established and BCC is represented in this group. Regular updates on the refugee scheme will be provided to Elected Members as further details emerge.</p> <p>3.8 The original ambition was to stand Welcome Centres in each council up by end of March 2022 and evolve thereafter. A recent readout from the SPG indicates that NIHE is now considering a single regional Welcome Centre. BCC has established an internal working group and will continue to work with partner organisations as the operating model and role of local government emerges. BCC has requested an ongoing readout of numbers and locations from the on-line sponsor and refugee registration system, which should identify the locations of sponsors where refugees will be based and provide an indication of scale.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>3.9 BCC costs to support the refugee programme will be estimated as the programme develops. TEO has indicated that councils will need to make use of existing resources as far as possible in the first instance. However, TEO recognises that additional resources may be required as action plans are costed.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>3.10 The programme to support Ukrainian refugees will be subject to equality, good relations and rural needs considerations.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	None