

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 20 July 2017
REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive
PORTFOLIO: Leader's Portfolio
SUBJECT: Syrian Refugee Crisis
WARDS: **Boroughwide**

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update Executive Board Members on the ongoing work being undertaken to ensure Halton is part of the Government's commitment to support Syrian Refugees caught up in the civil war.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) the contents of the report be noted;**
- 2) the Board supports the Chief Executive's use of Delegated Powers for an early termination of the support contract currently delivered by Refugee Action within the Liverpool City Council service specification; and**
- 3) the Board supports the use of a wavier of the procurement rules to allow the Council to extend/amend existing Supporting People contract with Plus Dane Shap to provide ongoing support to Syrian Refugees in accordance with Home Office funding requirements.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In February 2016 Executive Board Members agreed to support the Government's request to engage with both the Widening Dispersal programme for Asylum Seekers and the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) for Refugees.
- 3.2 Since this decision was taken, officers have been developing relationships, governance structures and processes to fully engage with both programmes.
- 3.3. This report deals **only** with the Syrian Resettlement Programme, through which Halton BC agreed to provide a resettlement home to 100 individuals, as part of the Liverpool City Region commitment of 510. This includes 12 months intensive support from date of arrival, followed

by a decreasing level of support across year's two to five.

- 3.4 In November 2016, Liverpool City Council commissioned Refugee Action for a period of 4 years. This included the delivery of the 12 months dedicated support that is a requirement of the Home Office funding arrangements. Halton along with two other local authorities in the Liverpool City Region agreed to "buy-in" into the contract for a period of two years.
- 3.5 Refugee Action (RA) work towards a self-empowerment programme not dissimilar to that used by other support providers, including that of Plus Dane Shap (PDS) who are presently managing the Halton BC support contract.
- 3.6 The model of support used by RA works well in a more diverse community, where a family is likely to seek assistance from other members of the community including the general public, people from a place of worship, school staff, and local businesses. The refugees can communicate and interact with such community members who can assist them to navigate life outside of the one visit a week that RA calls "intensive support".
- 3.7 Officers feel that the RA model of delivery does not sit as well in a less diverse urban community such as Halton.
- 3.8 Whilst it's acknowledged that RA staff have a wealth of experience with this client group, Officers feel an alternative approach may offer greater support to Refugees located in Halton.
- 3.9 It is proposed to terminate the existing contract with RA, by giving the required contractual three months' notice. This would ensure a termination date of mid-October 2017. The existing Supporting People contract with Plus Dane Shap could then be extended to include the provision of ongoing support to the existing families within the Borough, with an anticipated start date of August/September 2017. This will also allow PDS preparation time for new arrivals expected later in 2017 and early 2018.
- 3.10 The contract with RA allows the Authority to pay for services provided up to the end of the notice period, and then terminate all future support with the existing provider, Refugee Action. Whilst there will be a small overlap of service provision provided by two Partners during the interim period, it is considered necessary to ensure continuation of support for existing families, as required by the Home Office.
- 3.11 The purpose of the award via the waiver process is to appoint a designated local provider. Halton BC would encounter considerable difficulty in finding a suitable provider within the current time constraints (i.e. 3 months). Added to this difficulty is the fact that this is a relatively

new and niche market with only a limited number of suppliers offering such a service. The delivery of a specialist niche service and the lack of suitable providers within this market limit service choice and availability and following the advice from both legal and procurement services can be justified for the purposes of seeking a waiver.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Whilst there is no obvious impact on existing Council policies, officers have engaged with colleagues from Procurement and Legal Services to ensure the local authority is fully compliant.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As the programme is Home Office funded, there is no direct financial implication for the local authority; however by going through this process it is considered a more cost effective service.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

By awarding the proposed new contract, it is felt that there will be more direct support for these vulnerable children and young people.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

No obvious impact foreseen.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

There is no foreseen additional impact other than previously outlined last year, which sits alongside the Home Office requirements.

6.4 A Safer Halton

There is no foreseen additional impact other than previously outlined last year, which sits alongside the Home Office requirements. However, the potential to engage with a local provider will encourage a more integrated level of local support.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

No obvious impact foreseen.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 All risks will be assessed and mitigated where possible, and whilst there will be a small overlap of provision provided by two Partners,,it is

considered necessary to ensure continuity of support for existing families during the interim period, as required by the Home Office.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

No obvious impact foreseen.

9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

Will provide a more efficient and cost effective service to vulnerable clients within the Borough.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Alternative arrangements have been considered but could not be facilitated due to time constraints and limited resources.

11.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.