

REPORT OF Head of Legal and Governance & Monitoring Officer

To: Full Council

Subject: Community Sponsorship Scheme

Date: 15th July 2024

Reference:

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To seek approval to allow Pickwell to continue with their Community Sponsorship Application

1. INTRODUCTION

Community sponsorship is a mechanism by which local communities, organisations and charities can become directly involved in helping refugees settle in the UK. Community sponsors provide, both emotional and practical support to enable families to rebuild their lives in safety and to become self sufficient members of the local community.

The UK currently operates four resettlement schemes, which play a key role in the global response to humanitarian crises.

Local authorities, community sponsorship groups and the voluntary sector play a vital role in helping those arriving in the UK to adjust to a new life in the UK.

2. REPORT

Community sponsorship enables community groups to directly welcome and support a resettled family into the local community.

It is a significant undertaking, as a community sponsor will be allocated a family that is fleeing conflict, and it will be the groups responsibility to support the resettled family from the moment they arrive into the UK. The support includes: -

- a) Meeting the family at the airport.
- b) Providing a welcome and cultural orientation.
- c) Providing housing.
- d) Supporting access to medical and social services.
- e) Supporting access to English language tuition.
- f) Supporting registration with local job centre plus and assistance with navigating social welfare provision.
- g) Support towards employment and self-sufficiency.

The Community Sponsorship Group

The group is led by Pickwell who have a vast amount of experience in the resettlement arena. We currently work closely with Pickwell in relation to the Ukraine resettlement scheme which has proved to be successful.

The sponsorship group has 11 members and as Councillors will see from the application form attached at appendix 1, the group has a vast range of expertise designed to assist with all the requirements to provide assistance to resettle a family. The experience ranges from



health, social work, teaching, educational support, language assistance and much more. The group have a broad range of expertise.

The Home Office will approve every sponsor and a separate approval is required for each resettled family. The Home Office approval process is designed to establish the following: -

- a) The group has sufficient resources to support a resettled family.
- b) It works within a framework with clear responsibilities and structures in place.
- c) Has a credible plan for supporting that family backed by experience
- d) Does not present a risk to those they support.

Prior to submitting the application to The Home Office, the Local Authorities must give consent to a prospective sponsor to operate as a community sponsor in the area. Devon County Council have already given their consent (appendix 2).

The community sponsors, as part of their application need to confirm that they have available funding of at least £9000, the group have confirmed this and the fact that they have suitable accommodation for the family which is available for a minimum of two years. Pickwell are able to confirm this as they own the property. Pickwell have confirmed that the rent will be set at Local Authority Housing rates.

3. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

Local authorities need to consent to each community sponsorship arrangement in their area, to enable us the opportunity to consider the local impacts of the resettlement of additional families to the area, including on local services.

Financial Implications

No direct financial implications at this stage as the community sponsorship group have raised funds to support the family while they become settled and they have made provision to support the family with registrations with local job centre plus, and towards employment and self-sufficiency.

Human Resources Implications

N/A

Sustainability/Biodiversity Implications

N/A

Equality/Diversity

Torrige District Council have a commitment to equality and diversity to meet our obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty and to promote cohesion within our community. We have managed successful integration under The Homes for Ukraine Scheme, working in partnership with Pickwell.

Up until this point we have not had much involvement with the other resettlement schemes due to the lack of properties, the rural area and many of the refugees tending to head for the bigger cities where there is more of a community, and better access to transport links and employment.



