

	<h2>ACTION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BY OFFICER</h2>
Title	<h3>Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation</h3>
Report of	Chief Executive
Wards	All
Status	Public
Enclosures	<p>Appendix 1 – Government ‘Statement of Requirements’ for the Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation scheme</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Education costs associated with a child with identified SEN placed in a mainstream school</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Education costs associated with a child with identified SEN placed in one of the borough’s Special Schools</p>
Officer Contact Details	Dion Watts, Strategy Officer, Commissioning Group 020 8359 2001 / dion.watts@barnet.gov.uk

Summary

This report sets out what is required from Barnet Council – across a range of services including housing and social care - in order to achieve the Council’s commitment to resettle 50 refugees in Barnet as part of the Government’s Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation (VPR) scheme. The report provides background to the VPR scheme and how the Council will work with the Government to welcome and accommodate the 50 refugees and register them with the appropriate universal and specialist services in the borough. The report also sets out how the Council will assess the potential need for further support in order to meet the requirements of the scheme and the standards of service offered to all Barnet residents.

The report presents financial modelling of the potential costs to the Council of participation in the VPR scheme, based on initial assumptions about the size and potential requirements of those resettled – which will be subject to change based on actual referrals - and analysis of how these compare with the funding committed by Government to cover costs of resettlement for the first year of the scheme. The report also looks ahead to subsequent years. The Government has committed to providing funding for years 2-5 (in line with the period of 5 years Humanitarian Protection status that will be granted to refugees). The level

of funding available in years 2-5 is yet to be finalised, although the Government has committed to making funding available to cover this period. The Council is in close contact with the Home Office and expects to receive confirmation imminently.

Reflecting the degree of uncertainty about the potential financial implications – particularly over the longer-term if the circumstances of those resettled were to change - the report recommends the earmarking of a £100,000 contingency, allocated from the risk reserve. The size of the contingency fund will be kept under review and is intended to help meet the potential costs of delivering the VPR scheme in future years without placing an undue financial burden on service budgets.

Due to the urgent nature of the decision, the Chief Executive has utilised the urgent provisions in the Constitution to approve the earmarking of a contingency in order for the Council to move as quickly as possible to begin accepting referrals from the Government as it meets the commitment to resettle 50 Syrian refugees in the borough, reflecting the degree of urgency required and the preference of Members to respond as quickly as possible.

Decisions

1. To note that the Chief Operating Officer has, in accordance with his delegated authority, approved the earmarking of a £100,000 contingency, allocated from the Risk Reserve for the purposes detailed in the report to give effect to the Motion agreed at Full Council on 20 October 2015.

2. To note that the overall costs of resettling 50 refugees will be largely covered by Home Office funding, particularly in the first year, which is based on unit costs. The Council is in close contact with the Home Office with regards to the level of funding that will be made available for years 2 – 5. The exact costs will be determined by the specific needs of individuals when they arrive.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

Barnet's commitment

- 1.1 On 20 October 2015, Full Council unanimously voted in favour of a cross-party motion to resettle 50 Syrian refugees in the borough, subject to compatibility with the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation (VPR) scheme and in a way which does not disadvantage existing residents. Details of the motion are set out below:

"Syrian refugee crisis

Council has great sympathy for the plight of refugees, notably those driven from their homes in Syria.

Council notes that the current refugee crisis is the greatest such crisis in Europe since World War II and represents the largest mass movement of

people fleeing their homes and livelihoods since that war, with 4.1m people having fled Syria, and a further 7.6m internally displaced.

The scenes of human suffering played out daily on the news make us all conscious of the need for supranational and British Government action to end the conflict and allow normal life to be restored.

Council recognises that the vast majority of refugees that have fled Syria have been absorbed by neighbouring countries and notes that the UK has delivered over £1bn in aid, including large sums to support refugees in those neighbouring countries.

Council also notes that the government has agreed to resettle 20,000 refugees over 5 years in the UK.

Council recognises that Barnet is a place with acute pressures on housing. However it is a large borough with a proud tradition of helping those seeking refuge and is home to refugees and their descendants from all over the world. Indeed it is a borough whose own success has, in no small part, been built on the success of those who have previously sought refuge.

Council feels it would be wrong to shut our eyes to the situation of those in danger. Barnet therefore thanks the large number of residents who have already volunteered, donated or offered to assist those in need, and applauds the work of community organisations, notably Citizens UK, who have identified housing, schooling, GPs and even offers of employment in the borough.

Council commits to support their endeavours and to use its position as the leading organisation in the borough to inspire such generosity and enable others. Subject to compatibility with the government scheme and suitable funding, so as not to disadvantage our existing residents, we would commit to helping the community resettle at least 50 Syrian refugees in the borough as extra accommodation is found.

Council further recognises that many more people are likely to end up in the London boroughs as a result of this conflict, arriving via other channels (such as internal migration within the UK following initial resettlement). Council calls upon the Chief Executive to begin preparing plans to deal with this.

In the meantime, Council calls on officers to continue to take practical steps to support residents in assisting with the crisis; sign-posting information to help people donate and volunteer their services, such as those of a linguistic nature, or coordinate offers of accommodation.

Council notes that national government has the leading role in identifying, transporting and supporting refugees, but that every local authority in the UK has a part it can play. Council confirms that Barnet will do its bit.

Council therefore calls upon the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State and inform him of our borough's readiness to assist those in dire need, as we have done before and will do so again in the future."

- 1.2 Council officers have been working with the Home Office to understand the requirements placed on those authorities that volunteer to participate in the VPR scheme and have been developing plans to ensure the appropriate housing, health and social care and wider 'welcome' support is in place. Officers have also held discussions with Citizens UK, the Barnet Refugee Service, and local faith groups to identify the kind of support they could offer.
- 1.3 The Government has confirmed that refugees resettled as part of the VPR scheme will be granted Humanitarian Protection for 5 years, entitling them to work and claim benefits as soon as they arrive in the UK. At the end of the 5 years, they will be able to apply for indefinite leave to remain in the UK.
- 1.4 Council officers are working with Government to model costs of resettling and supporting refugees, based on assumptions about the profiles and needs of those resettled in the borough, and analysed against the unit costs specified by the Government. Further details of this are set out below.
- 1.5 The Council is able to influence the profiles of people and families that are referred to Barnet, based on the availability of accommodation in the private rented sector and other considerations. However, there is a degree of estimation in developing the costing at this stage, as the Council will not know the true costs until individuals and families are referred and their needs have been fully assessed.
- 1.6 Funding is being provided by the Government from the overseas aid budget to cover costs which the Council and partners are likely to incur during the first 12 months of resettlement. The Government has committed to providing funding for costs incurred in years 2-5. The level of funding available is currently unclear but the Council expects to have confirmation imminently. Initial analysis suggests that the funding set out in the Home Office unit costs to cover the requirements placed on the Council in the first year is likely to be sufficient, based on assumptions about the individuals and families resettled.
- 1.7 However, the potential financial impact on the Council will depend on the complexity of the support that will need to be provided to the individuals and families received. As such, the Council intends to take a prudent position and earmark a level of contingency within the risk reserve to help cover any additional costs which may arise if the Government's commitment to provide ongoing financial assistance falls short of what is required in practice, based on the needs of the individuals resettled, or if circumstances change in future years – for example, the risk that there is a breakdown in the initial accommodation provided.
- 1.8 In order to provide a degree of financial certainty to the Council's housing and social care services, this contingency will be allocated from the risk reserve. An earmarked reserve of £100,000 will be kept under review and reassessed as individual circumstances are assessed.

Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation (VPR) scheme

- 1.9 The Government is expanding the existing VPR scheme and intends to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection during this Parliament. The Syrian VPR is based on need and prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin: Women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence amongst others. The Government works closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to identify cases that they deem in need of resettlement.
- 1.10 Barnet is one of the first local authorities to make a firm public commitment to resettle Syrian refugees under the VPR scheme. In the debate on the motion to resettle refugees, Councillors made it clear that they wanted Barnet to be in a position to resettle the first people quickly, due to the urgent situation of many suffering people. The Government are keen to begin referrals to Barnet as soon as possible.
- 1.11 The size of households that can be accommodated in Barnet will be determined in a large part by the type of accommodation available in the borough. With demand for housing already extremely stretched, together with the need to provide beneficiaries of the VPR scheme with a degree of certainty about their accommodation, only housing in the private rented sector will be considered. As such, the use of temporary accommodation – particularly on regeneration sites - will be avoided for initial resettlement.
- 1.12 The process for referrals begins when the Council indicates to the Home Office the number of properties it has available and the number of people it can take in those properties, as well as confirmation that it has set up the structures to deliver the Government's Statement of Requirements (Annex A). Government will then refer a corresponding number of cases for the Council to consider.
- 1.13 Given the initial focus on accommodation, the Council's process for considering referrals will be led by Barnet Homes, and will also involve consultation with Family Services, Adults & Communities, and Education & Skills. The Home Office have advised that non-complex cases are being prioritised at this early stage in order to expedite the referrals process.
- 1.14 When cases are accepted, it is expected that the individuals or families involved will arrive in the UK 30 to 40 days later. The Council's responsibility begins as soon as they arrive at the airport. This referrals process allows Councils to ensure that referrals accepted can be matched with available accommodation and to stagger acceptances so that commitments can be achieved in a manageable way.
- 1.15 The Council will need to stagger arrivals in line with the availability of appropriate housing and support. The Council will move quickly, but it may take several months to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for 50 beneficiaries of the VPR scheme.

Meeting the requirements

- 1.16 A Strategic Working Group consisting of service leads from Family Services, Education and Skills, Adults and Communities and Barnet Homes has been convened to ensure that adequate provision is available in Barnet to deliver the Statement of Requirements as set out by the Government, and to consider additional needs which may arise among the refugee cohort in the first and subsequent years.
- 1.17 An Operational Working Group consisting of representatives from these service areas at a practice level has also been established. This group will look at the journey of those arriving in Barnet from the point of arrival and develop a triage process, cost tracking mechanism and management pathways into services. A keyworker approach will be developed to prevent services overlapping.
- 1.18 The Council has also received a large number of offers of support from local voluntary sector organisations, faith groups and residents and will work with these groups to ensure their skills and expertise are used where appropriate to increase support available to refugees in the community, as part of the triage process.

Housing and wraparound support

- 1.19 The supply of affordable private rental accommodation (LHA rates) within Barnet is very limited due to the buoyant private rental market and high demand, in part due to migration from inner-London. Nonetheless in Q1 & Q2 2015/16, the Barnet Homes 'let2barnet' team have acquired and let 138 private rental units in borough through their strong network of landlords supported by the payment of incentives. This provides a degree of confidence that accommodation in the private sector can be secured if acceptances are staggered.
- 1.20 In terms of housing type, it is more achievable to procure smaller units - the larger the unit the more challenging it is to acquire. It is therefore possible for Barnet Homes to deliver the units required to accommodate 50 refugees (assumption of 12 households) in the borough in the timescales proposed but only if smaller households (0, 1 and 2 bed) are accommodated.
- 1.21 The Council will develop a wraparound service to support those refugees who resettled in Barnet, led by Barnet Homes in liaison with adult and children social care services and health. Officers will continue to work with Citizens UK and other voluntary and community groups, such as Barnet Refugee Service, to consider how they could contribute to this support offer.
- 1.22 The desired outcome is to successfully re-settle the 50 Syrian refugees in Barnet by identifying sustainable tenancies and delivering the Statement of Requirements. Whilst the detail is being fully developed by the Operational Working Group, this would include:

- Procurement of property – with a higher standard of checks
- Linking up to Landlords who have offered to assist through Citizens UK
- Ensuring the unit is furnished in advance and key items such as bedding are provided
- Welcome and collection at the airport
- Provision of a welcome pack and groceries upon arrival in the property
- Translation services as required
- Completion of all paperwork including tenancy agreement and housing benefit application
- Co-ordinating funds (£200) to sustain the household pending receipt of benefits
- Assessment of immediate needs of the household upon arrival – clothing, groceries, etc
- Introduction to holding and sustaining a tenancy
- Sign-posting and support to all key services:
 - Claiming all appropriate benefits
 - Access to Barnet Crisis Fund
 - Registration with GP
 - All relevant assessments by key services – Education, Family Services, etc
 - School and college applications – linking up with Education
 - Access to training and employment support
 - ESOL classes
- Follow up home visits as required
- Linking households up to other key support and voluntary sector services e.g. Barnet Refugee Service, voluntary and community sector

1.23 Barnet Homes has advised that wraparound support could be delivered in-house by adding expertise and capacity within the existing let2barnet service by way of an additional negotiator. At an estimated total cost of £43,227 per year, based on provision for 12 households, this resource would be used to project manage the delivery of units of accommodation in line with the specification and requirements, take on the majority of the wraparound service and seek to sustain the tenancy of the households. In addition, support would be provided by the Welfare Reform Task Force with a clear path mapped to assist with access to benefits, training and employment.

Education

- 1.24 Some of the people referred to the Council through the Syrian VPR may be children of statutory school age and some of these children may have special educational needs. The Council will provide a school place for any refugee of statutory school age.
- 1.25 Since 2008, Barnet along with other London Councils has experienced a significant growth in demand for school places due to an increase in the birth rate and increased migration across the capital. Barnet has seen a significant demand for places in the primary phase (4-11) since 2008 and is now expecting a similar demand for secondary places as these children move from primary school into secondary school. Barnet has met this demand in the

primary phase by permanently expanding existing schools, welcoming new schools into the borough, and the provision of bulge classes.

- 1.26 Currently, there are areas of the borough where school places in certain year groups in the primary phase are challenging, in particular the Colindale area and in Burnt Oak. There are also challenges in the secondary phase for places in Year 11 (15-16 years) across the borough.
- 1.27 The Council can provide school places for children in mainstream schools, even if the school is full by utilising the Fair Access Protocol. This protocol, with all Barnet schools, enables children to be placed over number if necessary. The protocol requires a payment of £1,000 for the first child placed in the academic year and £500 for any subsequent child, to be made to the receiving school.
- 1.28 The support offer from Government includes £2,250 education funding for every child aged 3-4 years and £4,500 for every child aged 5-18 years. This should be sufficient to cover any payments to schools under the Fair Access Protocol, depending on the type of referrals received.
- 1.29 The Education service anticipates that a number of the children placed in mainstream schools may need support from our Specialist Teaching Team as they may have experienced trauma. The cost for this is likely to be minimal and is included in the Council's financial modelling (see paragraph 1.40).
- 1.30 It is possible that children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) may be referred to the Barnet under the Syrian VPR. The SEN assessment process will identify SENs that have not been previously recognised and will result in the production of an Education Health and Care Plan or a SEN Statement legally recording the child's needs. The SEN assessment process takes about a year to complete and the cost has been factored into the Council's financial modelling (see paragraph 1.40).
- 1.31 The costs of provision associated with these pupils are dependent on the individual needs of the child, and whether the Council is able to place them in a mainstream school. Annex 2 details the estimated education costs associated with a child identified as SEN that is able to be placed in a mainstream school (sliding scale based on individual needs). Annex 3 details the Education costs associated with a child with identified SEN that requires a place in one of the borough's Special Schools (sliding scale based on individual needs).
- 1.32 It should be noted that all four of the borough's Special Schools are under significant pressure. This could result in refugee children with SEN being placed in schools out of the borough. This would incur significant additional costs for the Council of up to £150,000 per child for a term-time placement. When transport and social care costs are factored in, this can rise to £350,000 for a 52 week placement.

- 1.33 It should be noted that the likelihood of the Government referring a child who would require an out of borough SEN placement is low as non-complex cases are being prioritised at this stage.

Social Care

- 1.34 Although the Government are prioritising non-complex cases at this early stage, the possibility of social care needs arising among the cohort needs to be considered. Adults and Communities have estimated that 6 older adults may be among the cohort based on the rate of incidence in the general population. Given the hardships that the cohort are likely to have experienced by virtue of being refugees, the incidence of mental health needs among the cohort are likely to be higher than we would expect in the general population.
- 1.35 Family Services estimate that, based on an assumption that 24 children may be among the cohort, 19 of them may require assistance under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to assess their need for early help services. While not included in the Government's Statement of Requirements, this is considered to be a prudent measure given the hardships the cohort are likely to have experienced and the potential for any unaddressed needs to escalate to a severity that would necessitate costlier support from Children's Social Care. As the CAF is an early help assessment, the assumption is that this support would not be required beyond the first year.
- 1.36 Costs for meeting potential social care needs in the first and subsequent years are included in the Council's financial modelling (see paragraph 1.40).

Health

- 1.37 Funding from Government for medical care costs will be paid directly to the Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The costs are split into two – the cost of registering a new arrival with a GP, which is minimal, and secondary medical costs for refugees with more serious medical needs, which are potentially more expensive. Government have advised that legitimate costs above this would be covered.
- 1.38 Barnet CCG have been advised of the commitment to resettle 50 refugees as part of the Syrian VPR, and therefore that they can expect to receive £2,200 per person to cover primary and secondary medical costs, with further funding for costs over and above this to be discussed on a case by case basis.

Welfare

- 1.39 The funding from Government also includes £12,700 for each adult benefit claimant paid directly to the DWP. This is to cover income related benefits including Housing Benefit which will cover the rent on properties procured by Barnet Homes. It is anticipated that the Council will pay the first month's rent, as benefit payments may not come through immediately, and recover this through the Housing Benefit system. The upfront cost has been factored into the Council's financial modelling.

Employment opportunities

- 1.40 Employment support will be a key element of the Council's wraparound support offer. Building on the initial service pathways established through the Operational Working Group, the Council will broker support from Jobcentre Plus and other partners via the Welfare Reform Task Force to assess the skills of the cohort and provide assistance with access to employment in line with the Statement of Requirements.

Voluntary and Community Sector

- 1.41 Several local and national organisations are involved in the resettlement effort in Barnet. Citizens UK and the Finchley Reform and Finchley Progressive Synagogues were part of the coalition which petitioned the Council to agree to take the 50 refugees under the Syrian VPR. These organisations have helped to identify a range of support for the cohort, including a number of landlords willing to provide properties. Barnet Homes are working with these organisations to integrate this support into the wider accommodation offer.
- 1.42 While a number of residents had expressed willingness to accommodate residents in their homes, this was not deemed to be appropriate given the potential complexity of needs within the cohort and the requirement for the Council to provide a uniform support offer.
- 1.43 It is envisioned that, where appropriate, the local voluntary and community sector will help to play a role in the provision of wraparound support. This support is likely to be brokered by Barnet Homes to ensure that it is consistent with the Statement of Requirements and responsive to the needs of the cohort. The Council will continue to liaise with organisations such as the Barnet Refugee Service, from which the Council commissions services via a Section 75 agreement with Barnet CCG, as the operational requirements are finalised.

Funding the provision

- 1.44 The principle of the Syrian VPR scheme is that first year costs are covered, with a commitment to providing some funding for costs incurred in years 2-5, although Government is yet to confirm the level of funding available for subsequent years. To make the scheme workable for 20,000 refugees rather than a few hundred, as well as multiple local authority hosts, the Government has done some detailed work to move to a unit cost approach for year 1.
- 1.45 The costs are based on data drawn from all the current resettlement schemes Government operates – Gateway, the VPR, and the Afghan resettlement programme. However, these are significantly smaller than the proposed extension to the VPR and do not always provide helpful data for setting a unit cost at a level which gives confidence that partner organisations are reimbursed appropriately for specific costs. This is particularly true for additional medical and educational requirements and for social care costs. Government therefore proposes that:

- local authorities can be flexible between elements of the unit cost and pool them (i.e. to offset overspends in one area with underspends in another); and
- while a uniform approach is needed to deliver the scheme as quickly and effectively as possible, there will be instances where further discussion may be necessary and some costs effectively topped up.

1.46 Table 1 below sets out the unit costs which the Government will provide local authorities to deliver the VPR scheme:

Table 1

	Services	Adult	Child 5-18	Child 3-4	Child under-3
Government funding	Local Authority costs	8,520	8,520	8,520	8,520
	Education	0	4,500	2,250	0
	Special Educational Needs	0	1,000	1,000	0
	TOTALS	8,520	14,020	11,770	8,520
LBB estimated costs*	Housing and wraparound support	4075	4075	4075	4075
	Children's social care	0	3333	3333	3333
	Children's SEN	0	2579	2579	0
	Education	0	778	778	778
	Adult social care	4960	4902	0	0
	TOTALS	9035	10765	10765	8186
	VARIANCE	-515	3255	1005	334

Figures are based on the following assumptions about the profiles (Table 2) and needs (Table 3) of the refugee cohort:

Table 2

	Households	Family structure	Adults under-65	Older adults	Children
	3	families of 5 people	2	1	2
	3	families of 4 people	1	1	2
	5	families of 4 people	2	0	2
	1	families of 3 people	1	0	2
Totals	12		20	6	24

Table 3

Type of provision	Client group	Number of units in receipt	Average cost of provision (£)	Totals (£)
Assessment	U65 adults / older adults	8	286	2,288
Carers' assessment	U65 adults	8	1,208	9,664
Community care	Older adults	3	300/week	46,800
Community care	U65, mental health issues	3	450/week	70,200
Common Assessment Framework	Children	19	1,000/year	19,000
Child In Need Plan	Children	3	3,000/year	9,000
Child Protection Plan	Children	2	3,000/year	6,000
Looked After Child	Children	1	46,000/year	46,000
School place (Fair Access Protocol)	Children	24	750/year	18,000
Specialist Teaching Team	Children	15 hours for whole cohort	44/hour	662
SEN Assessment	Children	24	2,579	61,896
Housing and wraparound support	Households	12	16,981/year	203,775
Total estimated cost for first year (£)				493,265**
Total projected variance from Government funding for the cohort as modelled (£)				13,735**

****Actual costs will vary depending on the individuals received; therefore we will set aside a contingency of £100,000**

1.47 Government funding for local authority costs are intended to cover management of the scheme, housing, and cultural integration including English language provision as set out in the Statement of Requirements. There is an element included in the local authority costs for social care and Government have advised that any cases where these cannot be accommodated within the stated figure would need to be topped up separately. For SEN, the provision is expected to cover an assessment, and any specific needs identified would then need topping up separately per child.

1.48 The Council's costs are based on financial modelling conducted by Barnet Homes, Adults and Communities, Family Services and Education & Skills. Table 1 suggests that the first year funding from Government is likely to be sufficient to meet the costs it is intended to cover. The funding position for the first year only is represented as the Government is yet to confirm the detail of the additional funding it will provide to assist with costs incurred in future years.

- 1.49 Should assessments by social and education services identify additional needs among the cohort, this could lead to additional costs in the first and subsequent years, which is why the contingency fund is needed.
- 1.50 If additional funding were required, the Council would also look to the Barnet Crisis Fund, which has underspent in previous years. £114,000 of the £570,000 annual budget (20 per cent) had been allocated as at 28 October 2015. However, funding for 2016/17 has not been secured yet.

Future funding risk

- 1.51 On 2 October 2015, the Minister for Syrian Refugees, Richard Harrington, advised that the Government would provide additional funding to assist with costs incurred in future years. However, with the detail of this yet to be confirmed, it is recommended that the Council should plan for a worst case scenario in year 2 onwards.
- 1.52 In terms of future years, the assumption is that housing and support costs would remain roughly the same, while education and social care costs would reduce as needs assessments will have been completed. Table 4 shows the potential costs for the Council in years 2-5:

Table 4

Ongoing social care costs for children (£ per annum)	60,000
Ongoing social care costs for adults (£ per annum)	117,000
Ongoing education costs (£ per annum)	18,000
Ongoing housing and wraparound support (£ per annum)	191,491
Total (£ per annum)	386,491

- 1.53 The Home Office is putting together a five year package of funding. The Council has ongoing discussions with the Home Office about the level of funding available for years 2-5 and expects this to be confirmed imminently.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The need for an earmarked contingency is a prudent step due to the potential uncertainty about the financial impact on the Council. The level of the fund will be kept under review. The Government's Statement of Requirements represents the minimum provision that all beneficiaries of the scheme must receive from the Council, and service leads from Family Services, Education and Skills, Adults and Communities and Barnet Homes have identified potential additional needs which could arise over the 5 years.
- 2.2 Allocating the contingency from risk reserve is recommended, given the existing demands on services to make significant savings in the coming years.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The alternative to a contingency approach is to meet any costs over and above those funded by the Government from service budgets as they arise. This approach was not recommended as it is inconsistent with the Council's approach to financial management, which is to anticipate future demand and plan ahead to deliver effectively with reduced budgets where necessary, avoiding damaging in-year cuts to services.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Funding for the reserve will be drawn down from the risk reserve as part of the 2016/17 budget planning process.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2015-20 states that the council working with local, regional and national partners will strive to ensure that Barnet is a place:
- of opportunity, where people can further their quality of life
 - where people are helped to help themselves, recognising that prevention is better than cure
 - where responsibility is shared, fairly
 - where services are delivered efficiently to get value for money for the taxpayer.
- 5.1.2 Barnet's Health and Wellbeing Strategy prioritises health and social care integration. The resettlement of Syrian refugees in Barnet will require close working between the Council and Barnet CCG in order to deliver the Statement of Requirements and ensure that any further health and social care needs among the cohort are addressed in a joined up way. Council Officers are already engaging with the CCG regarding expected dates and processes for receiving payments from Government, and the best approach for communicating Barnet's commitment to resettle 50 Syrian refugees to GPs and other health services. Going forward, the priority will be to maximise efficient use of resources between local agencies and ensure a seamless health and social care experience for the cohort.
- 5.1.3 The impact that the 50 Syrian refugees will have on the overall health needs of the Barnet population cannot be determined with certainty at this point; however the Syrian VPR priorities people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence. The Statement of Requirements makes reference to provision of mental health services and specialist services for victims of torture.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.2.1 The recommendations fully cover the financial decisions that need to be made and the associated costs, variables and risks have been set out with input from the Finance department.

5.2.2 The risk reserve would be affected by the recommendations and contains sufficient monies to accommodate a £100,000 contingency. This will help to limit the resource implications for other Council services. Cash flow implications have been considered and factored into the modelling of costs.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

5.3.1 Council Constitution, Financial Regulations, 4.4.12 (Balances and Reserves) states that “Full Council, sets out the Council’s approach on the level of balances and reserves, having taken account of advice from the Chief Finance Officer (section 151 officer) as stated in 4.1.1. Allocation to and from the balances and reserves will be the responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer (section 151 officer) in line with the principles that Full Council have agreed.”

5.3.2 Council Constitution, Financial Regulations, 4.4.3 (Making changes to the budget) states that “Amendments to the revenue budget can only be made with approval as per the scheme of virement table below;” which includes the following provision: “Virements for allocation from contingency for amounts up to £250,000 must be approved by the Section 151 Officer in consultation with appropriate Chief Officer.”

5.3.3 In accordance with the provisions detailed at 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 above, the Chief Operating Officer has the delegated authority to approve the earmarking of a £100,000 contingency from the Risk Reserve without recording the decision via a delegated powers report. However, to provide Members with the assurance that the cross party Motion agreed at Full Council on 20 October 2015 has been given effect, this report details the decision taken by the Chief Operating Officer using his delegated powers and other actions being taken by officers.

5.4 Risk Management

5.4.1 The main risk of participation in the VPR is that the funding provided by Government will be insufficient to meet the needs of the refugee cohort in the first or subsequent years. This would place a financial burden on the Council services involved in meeting the needs of the refugee cohort, particularly Housing, Education and Adult and Children’s Social Care.

5.4.2 The likelihood of this risk occurring is assessed in paragraphs 1.40 – 1.44 along with the recommended mitigation, which is the creation of an earmarked contingency, allocated from the risk reserve. If approved, this would make the likelihood of a future financial impact on services low enough to be tolerable. The analysis supporting this view is based on a very pessimistic assumption

of future funding from Government, and as such represents a worst case scenario that is unlikely to manifest itself.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity

5.5.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

5.5.2 The Council's participation in the VPR scheme was agreed by Full Council on the basis that it does not disadvantage existing residents and therefore these proposals have been designed with that objective in mind and they are not expected to have an equality impact on residents.

5.5.3 Barnet has a proud tradition of welcoming and supporting newcomers to the borough and celebrating the broad faith and cultural diversity of our communities as a strength. Where appropriate, it is proposed to involve faith, voluntary sector and community partners both directly and through the Council's strategic forum, the Communities Together Network, in the welcoming and resettlement of refugees so that good community relations and community cohesion are promoted and our refugees are given the best possible start to their life in the borough. The situation will be kept under review.

5.6 Consultation and Engagement

5.6.1 No consultation is planned for this decision as impact on service users is unlikely. The Council's participation in the VPR scheme was agreed by Full Council on the basis that it does not disadvantage existing residents.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 Joint motion in the names of Councillor Richard Cornelius, Councillor Alison Moore and Councillor Jack Cohen – Syrian refugee crisis

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s26545/Joint%20motion%20in%20the%20names%20of%20Cllr%20Richard%20Cornelius%20Cllr%20Alison%20Moore%20and%20Cllr%20Jack%20Cohen.pdf>

Unanimously agreed by Full Council on 20 October 2015

7. DECISION TAKER'S STATEMENT

7.1 *I have the required powers to make the decision documented in this report. I am responsible for the report's content and am satisfied that all relevant advice has been sought in the preparation of this report and that it is compliant with the decision making framework of the organisation which includes Constitution, Scheme of Delegation, Budget and Policy Framework and Legal issues including Equalities obligations.*

8. OFFICER'S DECISION

I authorise the following action

8.1 To noted that the Chief Operating Officer has, in accordance with his delegated authority, approved the earmarking of a £100,000 contingency, allocated from the Risk Reserve for the purposes detailed in the report to give effect to the Motion agreed at Full Council on 20 October 2015

8.2 To note that the overall costs of resettling 50 refugees will be largely covered by Home Office funding, particularly in the first year, which is based on unit costs. However, exact costs will be determined by the specific needs of individuals when they arrive.

Signed



Chief Executive

Date

17/11/15
