



## North Devon Council

Report Date: 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2023

Topic: Afghanistan Resettlement Schemes

Report to: Strategy & Resources Committee

Report by: Jeremy Mann; HoS, Planning, Housing & Health

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This paper provides Members with an update on two Afghanistan resettlement schemes, namely the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), due to their potential impact on local housing services and demand for temporary accommodation.
- 1.2. In June 2022, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) offered 12 units of family accommodation at RMB Chivenor. This was part of a national scheme, providing up to 550 houses across the country, to assist families who had an association with UK armed forces.
- 1.3. Officers reported to Full Council in July 2022 with a recommendation to lease some of these units (6) under the then Security Force Assistance Scheme (now the ARAP). This paper is available at:  
<https://democracy.northdevon.gov.uk/documents/s20182/Full%20Council%20Report%20Afghan%20Scheme%20July%202022.pdf>
- 1.4. The Home Secretary has recently announced that all bridging hotels accommodating Afghan citizens will be closed. Residents will be issued with 3 months' notice to vacate. Those who are unable to secure alternative accommodation will be advised to approach a local authority as homeless.
- 1.5. This report makes recommendations for accommodating more people from Afghanistan under the ARAP scheme in ND, by maximising the use of all the available houses at RMB Chivenor.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1.1 Note the potential impact of the SFA/ARAP schemes on local housing need.

- 2.1.2 Accept the MoD's original offer of 12 units of family accommodation at RMB Chivenor.

### 3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. (Reason 2.1.1.) The local closure of 2 x bridging hotels could impact on housing services in ND.
- 3.2. (Reason 2.1.2.) Increasing the supply of temporary accommodation at RMB Chivenor reduces the risk of a lack of supply and/or increased costs associated with NDC's statutory homeless duties.

### 4. REPORT

- 4.1. In March 2023, the Home Office announced that all Afghanistan citizens currently living in bridging hotels will be issued with 3 months' notice to leave. This equates to around 8,000 people. Half of this group are children and most people have been living in these hotels for over 12 months.
- 4.2. There are two bridging hotels in Devon. One in Exeter and one in Exmouth. They house around 140 people.
- 4.3. The Home Office has announced a new programme of additional local authority funding to help accommodate these people in settled accommodation when they leave their hotels and to ease homelessness pressures.
- 4.4. In 2022, the MoD offered NDC the opportunity to lease 12 houses at RMB Chivenor to assist people under the SFA/ARAP scheme. Full Council considered this offer in July 2022 and agreed to lease 6 family units of accommodation, Minute 23 Council 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022 refers, which is available at <https://democracy.northdevon.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=13250>
- 4.5. Contracts are now being progressed to lease 4 x 2 bed units and 2 x 3 bed units.
- 4.6. The Home Office 'matches' a suitable family to the size of the accommodation on offer.
- 4.7. Housing demand could increase on NDC following closure of the hotels in Devon. Using all the available accommodation at RMB Chivenor could reduce the potential impact of this on the Council's statutory homeless duties.

- 4.8. In the future, all arrivals will go directly into temporary accommodation and the use of bridging hotels will end. Flights from Afghanistan are currently suspended due to security concerns, however, people in the country can still apply to come to the UK under the ACRS.

## 5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. Government funding for the ARAP will be passported to NDC from DCC. It is significant and amounts to:

£10,500 p<sup>-1</sup> year 1  
£6,400 p<sup>-1</sup>, year 2  
£4,400 p<sup>-1</sup>, year 3

- 5.2 This level of funding is sufficient to cover all the housing support costs the Council will incur assisting the families settle into their new accommodation.
- 5.3 There will be an impact on the Legal team in terms of negotiating and entering into the leases with the MOD which may require external support where there are capacity issues, given conflict with other high priority projects, if there is urgency to get these leases in place.

## 6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

- 6.1. The Government has provided an equalities' report on the ARAP, which is available at:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/966658/Afghan\\_LES\\_EIA.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/966658/Afghan_LES_EIA.pdf)

## 7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

- 7.1. Scope 1: Greenhouse gas emissions will increase if the Council increases the number of residential properties it controls.

## 8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 8.1.1. The recommendations support the Council's ability to meet local housing needs.

## 9. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Part 3 Annexe 1 paragraph 1 and to note that this is delegated power.

## 10. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.



## 11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:  
(The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

## 12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers.

J W Mann  
Head of Planning, Housing & Health