

Cherwell District Council

Executive

4 September 2023

Increase service family accommodation for ARAP scheme members

Report of Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing

This report is public

Purpose of report

To increase the delivery of housing and support for the ARAP scheme (Afghan Resettlement and Assistance Programme) in Cherwell. The original figure was to accommodate 10 families in MOD housing which has now been achieved. The request is to increase our offer of accommodation for a further 6 properties making 16 in total by early 2024.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 to delegate authority to Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing in consultation with Portfolio Holder Housing to:
 - a. agree variation to existing agreement to extend the offer of accommodation from 10 properties to 16 properties for the period as deemed appropriate.
 - b. agree and utilise future accommodation for the same purpose.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 Cherwell DC have taken ten families through the ARAP scheme to resettle in Cherwell. We have an agreement with the Ministry of Defence to use their housing stock for this purpose.
- 2.2 The original six properties / families are settling well with extended leases till March 2025
- 2.3 A further four properties have been released to Cherwell bringing the group of properties to ten, as agreed.

- 2.4 Families from the closing bridging hotel accommodation are being matched to these properties.
- 2.5 These four properties will have three-year leases until 2026.
- 2.6 We have been offered a further six properties to resettle more Afghan families who worked with British forces during the war in Afghanistan.
- 2.7 The next tranche will be for a further six families.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 The ARAP scheme offers priority relocation to eligible current or former Afghan nationals who were locally employed staff by the British military forces and who are assessed to be under serious threat to life.
- 3.2 CDC currently leases 10 properties from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for housing Afghan refugees under the Government’s ARAP scheme. Consent for this was given by the Chief Executive using urgency powers in September 2021.
- 3.3 The properties were held initially on 12-month leases, and they have all been extended to cover up to a maximum of three years. The properties are managed on our behalf by Sanctuary Housing.
- 3.4 Consent was originally granted for 10 properties, but only 6 were taken because the Home Office only wanted larger properties (4+ bedrooms) at that stage. The remaining four properties are currently being leased later in this year (year 2) for three years to accommodate families in bridging hotels.
- 3.5 Funding from the Home Office is for a three year period.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
LA Tariff (per person)	£10,500	£6,000	£4,020
Flexible Housing Funding accessible from April 23 for new families moving from bridging hotels	£7,100 per person as a one-off payment.		

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- 3.6 Across the original six properties, we have 43 persons. This means we will receive a payment of £258K in Year 2 and £173k in Year 3.
- 3.7 In the second group of four properties, we will have at least 20 persons. Basing our figures on this number.
- 3.8 In year 1 we will receive a payment of £210K plus the flexible housing supplement of £142K, equalling £352K. In year 2 £120K and £80,400 in year 3.
- 3.9 The final size of the properties on offer from the MOD is currently under discussion. These figures are based on smaller three bed properties.
- 3.10 The intensive initial support element is delivered currently by Connections. Connection Support costings for 12-month support was £129,469 for 6 families (£21,578 / family).
- 3.11 These costs do not include the provision of furniture previously estimated at £4K. The MOD now supply all white goods reducing the costings for set up.

Staff

- 3.12 We currently have one full-time Resettlement Officer to oversee the funding and support the families. An additional Resettlement Support Worker will pick up the support once the initial intensive support period is complete. It is expected that only light-touch support will be needed, enabling us to move from extended expensive support from Connection. This budget also pays a third of the Head of Resettlement salary.

Key dates/next steps

- 3.13 Families will be pre-matched from bridging hotels where possible and then with family groups needing homes currently waiting in Pakistan.
- 3.14 Leases negotiations need to be concluded.
- 3.15 Connection to be approached to consider extending wrap around support to a further six families.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Agree a further six properties under the ARAP scheme to take CDC to a current total of 16.

5.0 Consultation

Ministry of Defense (MOD) Service Family Accommodation (SFA) properties
Home Office resettlement team
Sanctuary Housing

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not offer to partner the Home Office in their commitment to settle families in the UK who were part of the United Kingdom military operation in Afghanistan. Rejected because Cherwell District Council considers itself part of the UK response to supporting refugees

Option 2: Provide accommodation through our regular housing register.

Rejected By partnering with the MOD we are able to provide a resource not usually available to non-service personnel and so protect the applicants on the housing register from an increase in people seeking homes through that route.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 Nil impact on revenue as funded by central government grant.
- 7.2 We have modelled the example on smaller units and families but given the proportionate nature of the funding there is still scope to cover costs within the budget should home or family size be larger.
- 7.3 Positively, our ability to offer support from in house staff, reduces extra additional costly grant agreements with Connection Support in years 2 and 3.

Comments checked by:

Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance. Joanne.kaye@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Legal Implications

7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report

Comments checked by:

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Democratic Services and MO, Shiraz.Sheikh@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk, 01295 221651

Risk Implications

7.3 Families could choose to leave these properties and move to other areas. However, voids would be filled fairly quickly with other eligible families and the remaining lease time will come with funding.

7.4 Sanctuary have agreed to offer housing management for the further six properties, so CDC needs not go out to tender and increase set up time.

7.5 Connection Support employ staff on temporary contracts and establishing timeframes for this new element of the programme is essential. CDC Resettlement Support team could not pick up the intensity that is needed when families first arrive. Connection could withdraw offer of support if understaffed and timeframes lengthen.

7.6 These risks will be managed throughout the service operational risk and escalated to the Leadership Risk Register as and when deemed appropriate.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader

Tel: 01295 221556 Celia.Prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Equalities and Inclusion Implications

7.6 This housing stock isn't available to our general needs list so we are not withholding stock from our current communities.

7.7 MOD will have stock returned in a well-kept state and rentable for their service families in the future.

7.8 Enabling growth within the Ambrosden area increases diversity in the local communities, aids integration, reduces isolation and supports resettlement.

Comments checked by:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader

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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision No

Financial Threshold Met: No

Community Impact Threshold Met: No

Wards Affected

Bicester South and Ambrosden

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Housing that meets your needs

Lead Councillor

Councillor Nick Mawer, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Document Information

Appendix number and title

- None

Background papers

None

Report Author and contact details

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