

Note of last Councillors' Forum meeting

Title: Councillors' Forum
Date: Thursday 22 October 2015
Venue: Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as [Appendix A](#) to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	<p>Richard Harrington MP - Syrian Refugees</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Members to Councillors' Forum. He also welcomed Richard Harrington MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Syrian Refugees.</p> <p>The Minister praised the local authorities for their responses so far to the crisis and commented on the offers of aid he has already received from local authorities across the UK. He explained that refugees are assessed against UNHCR criteria of vulnerability so people being resettled in the UK are those most in need.</p> <p>The Minister outlined the priorities for his department, working closely with local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extending the Vulnerable Persons Programme which operates in many local authorities to help in resettling refugees.• Expanding the number of local authorities that national Government is working with, acknowledging that circumstances are different in different areas.• Working with some local authorities to establish the appropriate funding arrangements to ensure that refugees are protected while keeping costs to a minimum. <p>The Minister paid tribute to the response of local people, but confirmed that the Government is not looking for individuals to host refugees in their homes because of issues such as child protection.</p> <p>The floor was opened up to questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members asked for clarification on whether Government funding to support asylum seekers would move to wherever the individual was resettled, rather than remain with the local authority with which they were first placed. Members also asked that the wider dispersal arrangements for asylum seekers should not be	

decoupled from the more recent 5 year programme for Syria announced by the Prime Minister.

- With specific reference to London, Members stressed that unless the Housing Benefit Cap was raised, most London councils would be unable to take any refugees.
- Members emphasised the need for a more equitable dispersal of families across the country under the wider scheme, and raised the point that in certain areas some refugees were being placed in hotels due to lack of capacity.

In response, the Minister gave his commitment that funding would move with the refugees as opposed to remaining with the original council. The Minister confirmed that there were no plans to raise the current Housing Benefit Cap, but that Government were considering introducing some kind of top up system.

The Minister acknowledged the need for a more equitable dispersal system across the country and that this would be looked at by his team. He reiterated that resettlement is voluntary so no local authority should feel that Government is putting pressure on them to receive more refugees than they can provide for.

Members commented that in some areas the only barrier to local authority involvement is funding, and the need for this to continue until the individuals are able to financially sustain themselves. A key part of this is ensuring the efficiency of the assessment process and capacity to ensure that the whole system is working together.

2 Membership and Terms of Reference for 2015/16

Members **noted** the Membership and Terms of Reference.

3 Chair's Update

Members **noted** the Chair's update.

4 LGA Boards & Panel Chair's Reports

Members **noted** the reports from each of the LGA Board Chairs.

5 Digest of the last meeting

The minutes were **agreed**.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman		
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Jim McMahon OBE Cllr Marianne Overton MBE Cllr David Hodge	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Lincolnshire County Council Surrey County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Peter Fleming Cllr Sean Anstee	Sevenoaks District Council Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Members	Cllr Simon Cooke Cllr Claire-Louise Leyland Cllr Robert Bucke Cllr David Acton Cllr Roger Phillips Cllr Neil Clarke MBE Cllr Melvyn Caplan Cllr Simon Henig Cllr Kate Haigh Cllr John Merry CBE Cllr Amy Cross Cllr Lisa Brett Cllr Howard Sykes MBE Cllr Bob Dutton OBE Cllr Claire Kober OBE Cllr David Burbage MBE Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE Cllr Mike Eathorne- Gibbons Cllr Tony Jackson Cllr Sean Anstee Cllr Tom Fitzpatrick Cllr John Fuller Cllr Peter Golds Cllr Ivan Ould Cllr Timothy Swift Cllr Richard Watts Cllr David Wilcox OBE Mayor Dave Hodgson Cllr Peter Reeve Cllr Alan Seldon	Bradford Metropolitan District Council Camden Council Tendring District Council Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council Herefordshire Council Rushcliffe Borough Council Westminster City Council Durham County Council Gloucester City Council Salford City Council Blackpool Council Bath & North East Somerset Council Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council Wrexham County Borough Council Haringey Council Windsor & Maidenhead Royal Borough Gloucestershire County Council Cornwall Council East Herts Council Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council North Norfolk District Council South Norfolk District Council Tower Hamlets Council Leicestershire County Council Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council Islington Council Derbyshire County Council Bedford Borough Council Cambridgeshire County Council Herefordshire Council
Apologies	Cllr Gillian Brown Cllr John Beesley Cllr Paul Bettison Cllr Phil Davies Cllr Vince Maple Cllr Daniella Radice Cllr Philip Atkins Cllr Colin Noble Cllr Philippa Roe Cllr Bryony Rudkin	Arun District Council Bournemouth Borough Council Bracknell Forest Borough Council Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council Medway Council Bristol City Council Staffordshire County Council Suffolk County Council Westminster City Council Suffolk County Council

Cllr Caitlin Bisknell
Cllr Graham Chapman
Cllr Nick Forbes
Cllr Sue Woodward
Cllr Helen Holland
Sir Stephen Houghton
CBE
Cllr Claire Hudson
Cllr Chris Townsend
Cllr Paul Carter CBE
Cllr Keith Glazier
Cllr Blake Pain
Cllr Roy Perry
Cllr Mike Bell
Cllr Kevin Bentley
Cllr Isobel Darby
Cllr Ralph Bagge
Cllr Stephen Parker

High Peak Borough Council
Nottingham City Council
Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
Staffordshire County Council
Bristol City Council
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Mendip District Council
Mole Valley District Council
Kent County Council
East Sussex County Council
Harborough District Council
Hampshire County Council
North Somerset Council
Colchester Borough Council
Chiltern District Council
South Bucks District Council
Hart District Council

In Attendance

LGA Officers