

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

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

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