

Report to: **Council**
Date: **5 April 2022**
Title: **Grant to the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal**
Portfolio Area: **Strategic Overview – Leader of the Council**
Wards Affected: **All**
Urgent Decision: **Y** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**
Date next steps can be taken: **5 April 2022**

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is RECOMMENDED that:

- i) West Devon Borough Council makes a grant of £10,000 to the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal launched by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC).**
- ii) The grant is funded from a £10,000 contribution from un-ringfenced revenue reserves.**

1. Executive summary

1.1 This report recommends the Council making a grant of £10,000 to the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal launched by the Disasters Emergency Committee.

2. Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)

2.1 The commencement of hostilities in the Ukraine has resulted in unprecedented global condemnation and sanctions. Tragically, those hostilities have led to a humanitarian crisis on a vast scale not only within the Ukraine itself, but because of the digital world we live in, reaches beyond the borders of the Ukraine.

- 2.2 In early March, DEC launched the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal.
- 2.3 DEC brings together 15 leading UK aid charities, raising funds to quickly and effectively respond to overseas disasters and is regarded as one of the most efficient and effective means of providing humanitarian aid. DEC said that the message from aid workers was that "money was needed rather than specific donated items, which are often not necessarily what people require and are difficult to transport".
- 2.4 The Government has pledged to match up to £20million of any donations from the public. This has already been matched.
- 2.5 Members of the public can donate to the DEC appeal by donating online at <https://www.dec.org.uk/appeal/ukraine-humanitarian-appeal>

3 Devon's response

- 3.1 West Devon Borough Council has already joined together with Devon County Council and all the Devon Districts, in speaking out in concern for the people of Ukraine and their families.
- 3.2 In a statement, Cllr John Hart, the Leader of Devon County Council and Chair of the 'Team Devon', speaking on behalf of all of the Devon local authorities, said, "We are deeply concerned for those desperate people escaping conflict in Ukraine in huge numbers. We agree that we have a duty to do what we can in Devon to support families fleeing Ukraine to join their family members here in the UK."
- 3.3 Devon Councils have long worked together, alongside health and voluntary sector partners and local communities, to provide a safe sanctuary and resettlement for refugees, most recently Syrian families and those fleeing conflict in Afghanistan.
- 3.4 The Government has outlined support for up to 200,000 Ukrainian refugees under 'temporary visa concessions'. Further visas are being granted to those currently within the UK, including specific groups of workers, students and other visitors. The Government has also indicated its intention to launch a second scheme to sponsor people from the Ukraine to come to settle in the UK.
- 3.5 On 14 March, Local Authority Leaders received a letter from Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This gives details of the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme. A copy of the letter is attached in Appendix B.

- 3.6 The initial Government guidance on the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme has been published and is outlined in Appendix A. The Council is working with Devon County Council and Devon colleagues to work out respective responsibilities.
- 3.7 It is clear that the Borough Council will be expected to play a key role in supporting the scheme. This will include carrying out rapid suitability checks of proposed accommodation, completing Disclosure and Barring Service checks (DBS checks) on all adults living in the sponsoring accommodation and making urgent cash payments to enable individuals and families to get settled on arrival. Further information is available on the Council's website below:
<https://www.westdevon.gov.uk/stand-with-ukraine>

4. Local Government Association (LGA)

- 4.1 The four political groups of the Local Government Association (LGA) have endorsed a statement from the political leadership of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, strongly condemning the multiple attacks and violations of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. The statement of the LGA is attached below.
<https://www.local.gov.uk/lga-stands-support-and-solidarity-ukraine>

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 West Devon Borough Council declared a Housing Crisis in 2022. The invasion of Ukraine has left many families and residents without a home. In support of those people affected and suffering in the Ukraine, the report recommends the Council making a grant of £10,000 to the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal launched by DEC. This would be a response to an unprecedented set of circumstances. Europe faces its biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War.
- 5.2 The Council is a statutory body and has to identify the legal powers enabling it to incur the expenditure of £10,000 outlined in this report. This is set out in the legal implications section in Section 6 of this report below.
- 5.3 It is recommended to fund the £10,000 from a contribution from un-ringfenced revenue reserves.
- 5.4 Work continues with Team Devon colleagues to ensure that our wider offer of support, particularly the Homes for Ukraine scheme, is operational as soon as the final guidance is received from the Government. Given the speed of developments, we will circulate a supplementary paper to Members with the latest position at least a day before this Council meeting.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	<p>The Council is a statutory body and has to identify the legal powers enabling it to incur the expenditure of £10,000 outlined in this report.</p> <p>Councils have very wide powers under the General Power of Competence ("GPC") set out in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>This enables them to do anything an individual can do. However these powers are not unlimited and are constrained by legal limitations in for example extant legislation. In terms of the recommendations in this report, whilst the GPC may apply we take the view that there is a risk that they may not.</p> <p>However, Councils have powers under section 138 of the Local Government Act 1974 to incur expenditure in dealing with emergencies or destruction relating to life and property, affecting their area or their inhabitants.</p> <p>We live in a largely interconnected world so the hostilities in the Ukraine will affect people in the Council area in various ways and impact on the wellbeing of citizens as they view or experience the impact of war on civilians and on people they know who are affected.</p> <p>On balance we take the view that this power enables the Council to provide the grant outlined in the report.</p>
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	<p>The report recommends that West Devon Borough Council makes a £10,000 grant to the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal launched by DEC.</p> <p>It is recommended to fund the £10,000 from a contribution from un-ringfenced revenue reserves. There is sufficient funding for this payment to be financed.</p>

		<p>The Council has no treasury management investments in Russia.</p> <p>The Council is part of the Devon County Council Pension Fund. Russia represented 3% of the Emerging Markets Fund, therefore 0.15% of the total Devon Fund investments. Brunel instructed their appointed fund managers to sell Russian shares "at the earliest opportunity". The value of Russian shares is now 0.05% (1/3rd of what it was) of the Devon Fund total investments. At the time of writing the report, the remaining shares that have not been sold are currently untradeable and have therefore been marked worthless and are valued at zero. Therefore effectively the Devon County Council Pension Fund now has Nil value of investments in Russia.</p>
Risk	Y	<p>In order to mitigate any potential risks, legal advice has been sought on the proposal to make a grant and further advice has been sought from the Council's external auditor, Grant Thornton.</p> <p>If a placement breaks down, the Borough Council's normal statutory duty around homelessness is triggered, would could result in additional costs that are not funded within the original £10,500 per person of Government funding, (see 1.8 of Appendix A).</p>
Supporting Corporate Strategy		<p>There is not a direct link with 'A Plan for West Devon'.</p> <p>In support of those people affected and suffering in the Ukraine, the report recommends the Council making a grant of £10,000 to the Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal launched by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC).</p>
Consultation and Engagement Strategy		External consultation and engagement has not been undertaken with regard to this report.
Climate Change – Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		None directly arising from this report.
<i>Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications</i>		
Equality and Diversity		None directly arising from this report.
Safeguarding		None directly arising from this report.

Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None directly arising from this report.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None directly arising from this report.
Other implications		None directly arising from this report.

Supporting Information

Appendix A – Homes for Ukraine: guidance for Councils

Appendix B – Letter from Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State to Local Authority Leaders entitled 'Humanitarian crisis in Ukraine'.

Background Papers:

None

Appendix A

Homes for Ukraine: Guidance for Councils

- 1.1 The Government has published some initial guidance on the Homes for Ukraine scheme which outlines the roles of Councils across England in supporting the scheme. This is set out in the link below:

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications-topic&utm_source=684a1c3a-5fdf-4e53-b9a2-75bcaa99d197&utm_content=immediately

- 1.2 The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched on 14 March 2022 by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- 1.3 “Sponsor” or “sponsors” refers to an individual, group or organisation who has been approved to accommodate an individual or household from Ukraine under the “Homes for Ukraine” sponsorship scheme.
- 1.4 Sponsors must provide accommodation for a minimum of six months. Sponsors can also receive an optional ‘thank you’ payment of £350 per month for up to the first 12 months of sponsorship. This payment is limited to one monthly payment per residential address, regardless of the number of individuals sponsored. Payments will stop when the sponsorship ends.
- 1.5 The £350 payment will be tax free and should not affect the sponsor’s entitlement to benefits or council tax status.
- 1.6 Sponsors should not charge rent. They will not be expected to cover the costs of food and living expenses, although they may wish to offer this, especially in the early weeks while guests are finding their feet in the UK.
- 1.7 This scheme will be rolled out in phases. Initially, individual members of the public can sponsor a guest from Ukraine who meets the eligibility criteria for this scheme. In later phases organisations and community groups will be able to sponsor multiple guests.
- 1.8 The Government is providing funding at a rate of £10,500 per person to Councils to enable them to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities. The £10,500 for Ukrainian nationals is for the first year. The Government will review funding for future years in due course.

- 1.9 This funding is un-ringfenced and there will be an agreement between DCC and West Devon Borough Council as to the proportion each tier of Authority will receive of the £10,500 to administer the services needed.
- 1.10 There will be separate Government funding (in addition to the £10,500 per person) for children's educational provision.
- 1.11 The Government expect Councils to use the £10,500 to meet all of their associated costs (both for providing Council services and for administering payments).
- 1.12 Further guidance and further details on funding, including the conditions, will be published shortly by the Government.