

## RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

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Meeting date: THURSDAY, 18 JANUARY 2024  
Title: LANCASHIRE FORCED MIGRATION STRATEGY  
Submitted by: DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING.  
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### 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To request Committee approval for Ribble Valley Borough Council's inclusion in the Lancashire Forced Migration Strategy and commit to supporting the objectives and the approach in the strategy.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – To address the housing needs of all households in the borough.
- Corporate Priorities - To match the supply of affordable homes with the identified needs.
- Other Considerations -

### 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Refugee integration is co-ordinated by Lancashire County Council on behalf of 12 district authorities and two unitary. All 15 Councils work in partnership to deliver 10 active migration schemes in total.

2.2 There are over 6,000 resettled persons in the county requiring support through a Government Forced Migration Scheme. Lancashire has seen an increase of 200% since May 2021 and this is forecast to further increase over the next few years. LCC has prepared the Lancashire Forced Migration Strategy to set out the approach to addressing refugee integration in Lancashire. Officers have not been able to access a copy of the Strategy other than a power point presentation (see Appendix 1)

### 3. LANCASHIRE FORCED MIGRATION STRATEGY

3.1 LCC has presented this Strategy to Chief Executives across the County and has made three specific requests –

1. That the District Council approves a strategic approach to addressing forced migration in Lancashire.
2. That each district pools 5% of their asylum tariff.
3. Each district agrees to accommodating a minimum of 3 households.

3.2 The Strategy advocates a strategic Lancashire approach in addressing forced migration. This is not a new approach, and it has been happening in practice since 2016. Ribble Valley has the lowest number of arrivals since 2016 in Lancashire which reflects the district's capacity to house visitors.

- 3.3 In 2022/23 Ribble Valley Borough Council was awarded £22,500 from the Asylum Dispersal Fund, LCC have requested that each district commit 5% of their funds into a pooled County fund, which in Ribble Valley case will be £1,125. Lancashire County Council will use the pooled funds to provide support to the individuals that are resettled in the district including English language training and support in finding school places and GPs. The Council has not used any of the grant money yet.
- 3.4 Consultation with LCC has confirmed that the request for a minimum of 3 households to be housed in the district entails LCC acquiring properties from the private rented sector. LCC will require Ribble Valley Borough Council to inspect and approve the properties as suitable. Although this will not have a direct impact on the affordable stock it may have indirect implication due to a reduction of available properties in the private rented sector. It should be noted that the Council does not have any powers to influence the sale of private properties and the potential of such properties not being available for rent. It should be noted that the request relates to a minimum of 3 households. Officers will monitor the level of asylum seekers housed in Ribble Valley and any issues will be raised with LCC at Forced Migration monitoring meetings.
- 3.5 If the Council refuses to be part of the Lancashire wide approach it is likely that the Home Office will approach the Council directly to assist with housing asylum seekers with the numbers involved unknown at this stage. With a limited private rented housing stock this could increase pressures and have resource implications within the housing team.

#### 4 RISK ASSESSMENT

##### 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – Ribble Valley BC was awarded £22,500 asylum dispersal money in 2022/23 to support the rehousing of asylum seekers. The Grant was not accompanied by an SLA or MoU. No money has yet been committed. LCC's request for 5% amounts to £1,125 which is relatively a small amount. In the absence of LCC providing the support, there will be more pressure on local charities to support these individuals.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal –RVBC officers from the housing team and possibly Surveyors will be required to inspect any properties LCC secure for suitability and approve occupation by the resettled household. Although this will have an impact on officer time, it is not expected to be a significant demand.

There are no other Environmental or Legal issues arising from this report.

- Political – The successful integration of refugee and asylum seekers arriving in Lancashire and specifically in Ribble Valley can be a politically sensitive matter. The Strategy ensures that the approach in Ribble Valley is based on co-operation across Lancashire.
- Reputation – The successful integration of refugee and asylum seekers through pan Lancashire collaboration will have a positive impact on the Council's reputation.
- Equality & Diversity – Participation in the delivery of the Strategy will ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are appropriately supported to integrate into local communities.

**5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Confirm agreement for Ribble Valley to be part of the Lancashire wide approach to Forced Migration Strategy including the following, subject to a suitable agreement with LCC:

- 1) 5% of the Council's 2022/23 Asylum Dispersal money to be provided as part of the County wide pooled fund.
- 2) Accommodate a minimum of three households in Ribble Valley. The level of demand will be kept under review and reported to Committee.

5.2 Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning to approve suitable properties to be used to house refugee and asylum seeker in Ribble Valley.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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