

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)**  
**held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 3 November 2022**

Present:

Members: Councillor L Bigham (Chair)

Councillor S Agboola  
Councillor R Bailey  
Councillor A Hopkins  
Councillor S Keough  
Councillor R Singh  
Councillor R Thay

Other Members: Councillor S Keough (substitute Councillor Gardiner)  
Councillor D Welsh, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

Invited: B Bilokur (guest)  
E Hemmings (host)  
K Kamma (Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre)  
R Leszczyszyn (Ukrainian Association)  
P Luczka (Ukrainian Association)

Employees

Education and Skills P Barnett, N Johal, N Tsyhankova

Law and Governance G Holmes, C Taylor

Apologies: Councillors J Gardiner, G Hayre and M Heaven

## **Public Business**

### **14. Apologies and Substitutions**

### **15. Declarations of Interest**

The Scrutiny Board noted that Councillor Hopkins dealt with casework relating to Ukrainian guests in her employment capacity.

### **16. Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 were agreed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

### **17. Homes for Ukraine**

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities introduced the item. The Board were advised that in keeping with preferences regarding the individuals concerned, that rather than being referred to as refugees, the term 'guest' was used and that the individual supporting the guest was referred to as the 'host'. The Scrutiny Board considered a Briefing Note and presentation which outlined the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, covering the following points:

- Information and background to the scheme.
- Coventry City Council's 9 main functions:
  - Initial Reception
  - Safeguarding Checks
  - Interim Payment of £200 for Guests
  - Community Integration
  - Provision of Education
  - Service referrals
  - Work and Benefits
  - Homelessness Assistance
  - Administering Payments to Sponsors
- An update on progress
- Support for Guests
- Support for Sponsors/Hosts
- Communication
- Matching and re-matching
- Additional Support
- Communication strategies
- Move on accommodation
- Long term integration needs
- Distribution of refugees from Ukraine across Europe
- Current numbers of properties accommodating guests, further guests expected to arrive in Coventry, accommodation checks completed and guests in employment
- Current guest numbers: 163 adults, 68 children.
- Location of people resettled under the Ukrainian visitor schemes
- Current challenges

The Scrutiny Board asked questions and received information from officers on the following:

- Under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, the Council received £10,500 per guest to cover the first year.
- Local figures for the Family Scheme were not available.
- After the first year, guests were independent and could move on. Information regarding location would be shared where possible.
- Some types of suitable accommodation were in short supply across the city however, officers were looking at how to support guests to take on tenancy agreements.
- The Homes for Ukraine Scheme was not just limited to Ukrainian nationals but to qualify, a person should be resident in the Ukraine at the outbreak of hostilities.

- Difficulties had been experienced when one parent was not from Ukraine as the application could not be undertaken online, but at the visa centre, where there were long delays.
- Translators were in good supply and there were multi-lingual assistants in the libraries available to work with guests. SITU services were also available if required. Guests generally spoke good English and were also focused on improving their English skills.
- Council officers worked closely with the guests and employers to assist in obtaining employment.
- Accessibility was good for guests wishing to undertake higher education at local Universities and the Migration Team assisted in signposting guests to areas of support such as university bursaries and student loans.
- Integration was part of the Migration teams every day work, connecting with community and voluntary bodies and hosts had played a huge role in helping guests become established and integrated.
- The Ethnic Minority Achievement Service in Coventry had supported placing children into schools and Government funding had provided multi-lingual assistants who supported the children's transition into schools with translation, induction and adjustment.
- Public computers and wifi were available at the library for guests to use. Hosts also raised any issues with the Migration Team and ensured communication with families back in Ukraine took place.
- Employment support projects existed however, the Migration Team would welcome further support for guests to start up their own business.
- Hosts webinars took place each month during which existing hosts provide support to new hosts.
- Support from Health colleagues to deal with trauma had been provided and support sessions were provided each week at the migrant centre.
- Apart from one or two, all other hosts have continued to host guests beyond six months and these guests had been rematched with no difficulties.
- Guests on the Family Scheme were less protected than guests on the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The visa system was not transparent and the timeline unpredictable.
- Challenges included sponsor families withdrawing interest, hosts not having the capacity to host more than two guests and whether there would be continued financial support for hosts beyond 12 months.
- Finding employment could be more difficult if guests had children as they would require childcare and/or school collection.
- Difficulties had been experienced regarding communication with the Home Office in terms of visas.
- A meeting had taken place regarding guest transition after 12 months, and further meetings were planned. The priority was to maximise current placements and the team were confident there would be a number of placements extending beyond 12 months.
- Qualified migrants obtaining employment in their specialism was complex and varied.
- Statistics had shown the majority of hosts were in the more affluent areas of the city.

The Board listened to the Ukrainian Association and the Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (CRMC), who discussed their work and the current challenges. Mr

Hemmings (host) and Mr Bilokur (guest) advised the Board how they became involved in the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and their involvement in the Ukrainian community in Coventry.

The Scrutiny Board welcomed all of the work of the Migration Team and other partners and asked for the following:

- Officers investigate scope to support Ukrainian guests to set up seasonal businesses.
- Officers make contact with the Royal British Legion to help Ukrainian guests with trauma and mental wellbeing.

**RESOLVED that the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) notes the Briefing Note and the Presentation on the Homes for Ukraine scheme.**

**18. Work Programme and Outstanding Issues 2022-23**

The Scrutiny Board considered the Work Programme 2022/23 and suggested that the Homes for Ukraine be included on the Work Programme in June/July 2023 and that the item on Dropped Kerb Applications be brought forward.

**RESOLVED that the items identified by the Scrutiny Board be added/brought forward to the Work Programme 2022/23.**

**19. Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of urgent public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.03 pm)