



**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL - URGENT KEY DECISION**

**DECISION OF: HUGH EVANS – EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES**

**WITH ADVICE FROM: ANNE JAMES, SERVICE MANAGER REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT**

**DIRECTORATE: ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES**

**DECISION NO: 031**

**SUBJECT: EMERGENCY TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES LEAVING BRIDGING HOTELS ON 19 AUGUST 2023 AND 31 AUGUST 2023**

**KEY DECISION: YES**

**REASON: The Home Office is closing hotels and bridging accommodation for Afghan refugees on 19 August and 31 August 2023. Temporary accommodation is needed for 161 people until private rented accommodation is available.**

**BACKGROUND**

The Home Office funds local authorities to provide wrap around support for specific Afghan refugees. This has been in the form of full board accommodation within 'Bridging Hotels'. In Bristol there are two Bridging Hotels.

At the end of April 2023, all residents in Bridging Hotels were given three months' 'Notice to Quit' (NTQ). One cohort of guests had to leave their accommodation by 19 August, and the remaining cohorts by 31 August.

When the Bridging Hotels close, people who haven't yet moved to other accommodation will be designated as homeless and will become the responsibility of the local authority.

The Bristol Refugee Resettlement Team has identified properties for 31 families who will move out of the hotels by their NTQ date.

30 families and four single people (a total of 161 people) will not have moved by their NTQ date. The Resettlement Team has been working with the Housing Options Team to plan for temporary accommodation (TA) for the 30 families who will not move out of the hotels in time. 24 properties have been matched to remaining families, but properties will not be 'key turn ready' by the NTQ date.

The Home Office has an Interim Accommodation Offer where families are moved into one of six hotels in the UK on a room-only accommodation basis until their accommodation is ready.

These hotels are not sited in the southwest, and hence temporary moves to them would be disruptive to the families and especially their children, who would have to move schools.

In consultation with the families concerned, it was determined that a preferable solution was to enable them to remain in Bristol for the interim period, prior to taking up their accommodation. Hotel accommodation has been secured offering the same level of support as was offered in the prior Bridging Hotel arrangement.

## **DECISION**

**To make a direct award for temporary accommodation, to suitable accommodation providers to enable 30 families to be accommodated up to and including 30 September. Extensions can be allowed for longer than 30 September only if a thorough appraisal of more affordable options is undertaken and is proven unviable. Officers will undertake Homeless Assessments and relevant procedures needed to draw down Housing Benefit and Home Office grants.**

**To approve £0.7m for costs up to 30<sup>th</sup> September and up to c.£1m if further extensions in relation to accommodation and support are required through to March 2024.**

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

£0.7m of funding for accommodation and support costs up to 30<sup>th</sup> September will be fully funded from grant funding and there will be no additional costs to Bristol City Council from this decision. Further funding up to £1m may be required and this also be covered and recouped from grants.

## **LEGAL POWERS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The provision of temporary accommodation is not a contract for goods, service or works – and is essentially a property transaction - and so is not caught by the Public Contract Regulations 2015. So, no legal obligation to tender etc. The Councils own procurement rules also do not apply to acquisition of interest in property.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

N/A

## **CONSULTATION**

The families concerned have been involved in the planning and decision-making processes and are happy with this proposed option. Consultation has also taken place with the Bristol Refugee Resettlement Board, the Chief Executive, Corporate Leadership Board, the Executive Director

for Adults and Communities, and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Adult Social Care and Integrated Care System. Discussions have also taken place with the Home Office.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

Costs will need to be closely monitored and controlled to ensure that the budget envelope is not exceeded.

Families have a right to refuse offered accommodation. If families refuse accommodation, then their homelessness status remains, and they will continue to reside in Temporary Accommodation. Those families that have been offered accommodation in Bristol thus far have been willing to accept it, however.

## **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

All clients are Afghan citizens who have arrived in the UK since July 2022. All clients are Muslim. There are no older people, and no person who has identified as being LGBTQI+ in the cohort moving into hotel accommodation.

50% of clients are female and 50% are under 16 years old.

The decision has a positive impact on:

- People with medical needs, people with prescriptions and people who are using local mental health services as there is continuity of primary and secondary care support.
- Women who are receiving support from health maternity services and health visitors.
- Early years children who can benefit from bespoke support from the Early Years team which will continue into the autumn term.
- School age children who can return to school on the first day of term.

There are no anticipated negative impacts for the client group from the move to the accommodation.

**This decision is being taken under the urgency/emergency powers provided in the officer scheme of delegations in the Constitution.**

The decision needs to be taken before the next Cabinet meeting can take place as the process for moving the families out of their current accommodation has started and will conclude by the end of the month. Alternatives must be in place as a matter of urgency.

SIGNATORIES:

DECISION MAKER:

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line and a small flourish.

Title: Executive Director: Adults and Communities

Date: 23 August 2023

**Consultees:**

Signed: 

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of connected, rounded loops.

Title: Chief Executive Officer

Date: 23 August 2023

Signed: 

Title: Mayor

Date: 24 August 2023