

COMMITTEE	COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	January 12, 2016
TITLE	Gwynedd Council's response to the Syrian refugee crisis
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr Ioan Thomas
PURPOSE	To inform members of preparations

1. BACKGROUND

Members of Gwynedd Council's Cabinet declared at an informal cabinet meeting their desire to provide assistance and assist national efforts in finding accommodation for Syrian Refugees. Since then every Local Authority in Wales has confirmed a willingness to provide assistance.

2. CONSIDERATIONS

Numbers – There is no formal confirmation regarding expectations upon individual authorities, however if the figure of 20,000 refugees mentioned in the Prime Minister's statement were apportioned equally across the UK, we would expect Gwynedd to receive up to 40 people, over period of four and a half years. We have therefore agreed to use this figure 40 for planning purposes. There have been discussions about when we would be asked to participate and the intention would be to invite about 10 people in the first intake as this would allow us to learn from the process.

Timescale - The expectation is that Gwynedd Council would participate in Phase 2a which could see the first group of refugees arriving in the new year however there is a degree of flexibility about when people could be accepted and it will ultimately be dependent on discussions with the Home Office and their ability to process and assess applications.

Location and Accommodation -Initial efforts have concentrated on identifying suitable accommodation in the north of the County for the first intake as it was felt it would be easier to identify support resources which would facilitate integration. Currently efforts are focusing on finding properties within the private sector to avoid pressure on social housing, however it may be possible to consider hard to let properties in the future.

Key Partners - Before accepting individuals we will be contacting other key agencies to ensure that efforts are co-ordinated and will be liaising with Health colleagues to ensure adequate health provision. We will also consider the experience of the four Welsh authorities, who have already received refugees to see if we can learn from their experience and emulate any good practice.

Voluntary Support - Over the past few months, several voluntary organizations based in Gwynedd have made noteworthy contributions in helping refugees and Gwynedd has an honourable tradition of providing support and welcoming people. It is our intention to work with these groups to ensure we benefit from their experience and to ensure that we use resources and expertise that already exists.

Financial Assistance - The Home Office have confirmed the financial package available to provide on-going assistance and to facilitate integration within the community. The

Westminster Government has confirmed that some money will be available beyond the first year with a promise that funding will continue for a period of 5 years although it will reduce over the next 5 years.

Status - The refugees who will be relocated in Wales have been identified as the most vulnerable and are expected to come directly from refugee camps based in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. They will have been through a thorough two-stage vetting process before arrival and have been granted five years full humanitarian protection, meaning they will be able to live, work and contribute within their communities.