

## Record of individual Cabinet member decision

Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

<b>Decision made by</b>	Helen Pighills
<b>Key decision?</b>	No
<b>Date of decision</b> (same as date form signed)	15 December 2022
<b>Name and job title of officer requesting the decision</b>	Ben Coleman Programmes & Assurance Manager
<b>Officer contact details</b>	Email: <a href="mailto:ben.coleman@southandvale.gov.uk">ben.coleman@southandvale.gov.uk</a>
<b>Decision</b>	<p>To approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Homes for Ukraine Guest Discretionary Payment Policy (appendix A) which outlines the council's policy to make emergency discretionary payments to Ukrainian guests who are resident in the district under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Payments will be made from the allocation already made to district and city councils by Oxfordshire County Council from the £10,500 central government allocation.</li> <li>the delegation of authority, if required, to the Deputy Chief Executive -Transformation and Operations in consultation with the Head of Finance (s151 officer) to review and amend the policy.</li> </ul>
<b>Reasons for decision</b>	<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>The Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme was launched on 18 March 2022 by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The scheme enables Ukrainians fleeing the war in Ukraine (guests) who have secured temporary accommodation with UK residents (hosts) to settle in the UK for up to three years. It provides a framework of support which includes the provision of visa's, safeguarding and safety checks for potential hosts and guests, access to benefits, education and healthcare as well as the right to work in the UK for the duration of their stay.</p> <p>Much of this support is provided by local authorities who have a duty to support guests when they arrive in their area until the end of the scheme. Full current government guidance for Local authorities is detailed <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>To meet the costs associated with these duties, DLUHC provide local</p>

authorities with a tariff of £10,500 per Ukrainian guest to enable them to provide support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities for the first year. The funding is un-ringfenced but must be used to meet all associated costs (including the provision of council services to guests and for administering payments).

### **Oxfordshire Approach**

In Oxfordshire, a countywide system approach has been taken to the scheme with districts and city working with the county council to support guests and hosts. The duties of each council have largely followed the statutory responsibilities of the councils but in a centrally aligned and co-ordinated way.

The tariff is paid to Oxfordshire County Council as the upper tier authority and accountable body. An allocation has been paid to each district by the county council according to the number of guests residing in their respective areas. The allocation is to cover all expenses incurred in execution of the districts' particular responsibilities under the scheme as well as an initial emergency £200 payment to guests when they arrive in the country. In Oxfordshire this is delivered by the county council safeguarding team via a pre-paid card.

The Guidance also gives Local Authorities the autonomy to make further discretionary payments to guests over and above the initial £200 payment. At the outset of the scheme, it was agreed that social workers performing the required safeguarding checks, could exercise their judgement under existing policies and procedures to make a discretionary payment to Guests should they identify a need during welfare visits. In order to further assist guests and to provide some flexibility in the support available, it was agreed on 22 June 2022 (see appendix B) across the Oxfordshire system that individual district and city councils can award discretionary payments to guests of up to £500 per guest, funded from their district allocation, where they identify a significant and urgent need. The discretionary payment aims to help guests with emergency one-off payments that will support guests in overcoming barriers to educational and employment opportunities for example to support moving-on from hosted accommodation arrangements. This is not an automatic additional payment to all guests, neither should it be made where other schemes/funds are available to assist the guest e.g., housing deposits.

While there has been little pressure to make additional discretionary payments since this point it is anticipated that this may change as the scheme passes its sixth month point. In line with government guidance Community Liaison Officers will shortly commence six months check-in visits to discuss guests moving on plans after the anticipated end of hosting after 12 months.

A considerable support package has recently been approved to facilitate guests access to the private rental sector, but there are areas, such as moving costs and furniture that are not covered. The £500 emergency

	<p>discretionary payment is intended to assist with this transition as well as providing support where officers identify an urgent hardship need, as guests face the escalating cost-of-living crisis and try to settle themselves more permanently.</p> <p>This decision note pertains to the proposed policy (appendix A) for the allocation and payment of these discretionary payments in Vale of the White Horse. It includes further detail on eligibility, how payment will be processed, how spend will be monitored and fraud minimised.</p> <p><b>Discretionary Payment Policy</b>  Guests in need of support will be identified by council officers (community liaison officers, housing officers) and employees of Asylum Welcome (commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council to provide support for the guests under the scheme).</p> <p>Payments will be made directly to guests through the council community hub in the form of a cash or retail voucher (using an approved supplier) depending on their needs and circumstances. By offering a choice of retail or cash vouchers, the payment is tailored to the guests needs and protects their dignity, autonomy and offers choice.</p> <p>At present, the approved supplier is HUGGG who have been successfully used for the allocation of household support fund. Other options are also being procured to offer further tailored support for guests and will be brought into the scheme as procurement is completed.</p> <p>A data sharing agreement is in place between Oxfordshire County Council and Asylum Welcome and consent will be obtained from the guest in order to pass details on. The current voucher supplier enables the council to issue vouchers to guest without passing their details on to the voucher supplier. Should another supplier be used then appropriate data sharing will be put in place as necessary under the advice of the data governance officer.</p> <p>To manage the risk of fraud, all guest details will be checked against the central scheme database (Foundry) Internal records will be kept by the community hub to ensure that individuals do not receive the payment more than once and to provide a clear audit trail of all vouchers issued. Payments will not be made into bank accounts and vouchers will not be sent to host mobile phones or email addresses or any other third parties. Instructions on how to use the vouchers will be translated for guests and the community hub can assist using translation support to ensure the guests know how to use the vouchers.</p>
<p><b>Alternative options rejected</b></p>	<p>Oxfordshire county council have offered to manage the payments by 'topping up' existing prepaid cards which they issue in order to give guests the initial £200 arrival payment required by the scheme.</p> <p>This option has been rejected as it has been agreed that schemes will be managed locally out of the city and district tariff allocation. To top up pre-paid cards which are managed by the county council adds another layer of complexity and delay which runs counter to the intention of the payment being of an emergency nature. Furthermore, it is an inefficient</p>

	<p>use of officer time and a complicates the necessary audit trail.</p> <p>To not offer the scheme. This would disadvantage guests at a particularly challenging time and would not be consistent with the rest of the county nor the aims of the HfU scheme.</p>
<b>Climate and ecological implications</b>	n/a
<b>Legal implications</b>	<p>Additional discretionary payments are permitted within the Homes for Ukraine government guidance and have been signed off at system level as per appendix B.</p> <p>Asylum Welcome are commissioned and contracted by Oxfordshire County Council to provide support services for this scheme and work closely with all of the Oxfordshire councils and their officers in the provision of this service. There are appropriate data sharing agreements in place.</p> <p>The hub will be using existing council providers who are on the crown commercial services procurement framework and with whom the council already has contracts in place.</p>
<b>Financial implications</b>	<p>All payments will be taken out of the tariff received by the district council. If every guest received a £500 payment (which is not the intention of the policy) the funds required are not expected to exceed the level of the funding received. However, if combined with our other commitments against the funding, demand for the £500 payments were sufficient to place pressure on our allocation the tariff amount can be revisited in the finance cell.</p> <p>In order to ensure that appropriate monitoring of financial commitments is proactively undertaken and to ensure accuracy of reporting and budget management, the spend will be captured and tracked locally and reported through the S151 Officer to the Homes for Ukraine Finance Cell for monitoring and oversight.</p> <p>Spend will be recorded and reported on in the monthly finance returns to Oxfordshire County Council as the accountable body.</p>
<b>Other implications</b>	<p>The discretionary payment policy has been driven by the particular demands resulting from the Homes for Ukraine scheme, the number of guests who have arrived in the county and the challenges of assisting people to settle and live independently in the districts at this time. Wherever possible, parity will be sought with other asylum related schemes across Oxfordshire.</p>
<b>Background papers considered</b>	<p>Appendix A – Proposed Homes for Ukraine Discretionary Payments to Guests policy</p> <p>Appendix B – Funding Allocation and Discretionary Payments 22 June 2022</p>
<b>Declarations/c</b>	

<b>Conflict of interest? Declaration of other councillor/officer consulted by the Cabinet member?</b>	n/a			
<b>List consultees</b>		<b>Name</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Date</b>
	Ward councillors			
	Legal <a href="mailto:legal@southandvale.gov.uk">legal@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Patrick Arran	Cleared from a legal perspective	29 November 2022
	Finance <a href="mailto:Finance@southandvale.gov.uk">Finance@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Emma Creed	Approved by email	14 November 2022
	Community Wellbeing <a href="mailto:jayne.bolton@southandvale.gov.uk">jayne.bolton@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Jayne Bolton	Approved	15 November 2022
	Information Governance <a href="mailto:sandy.bayley@southandvale.gov.uk">sandy.bayley@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Sandy Bayley	Approved	11 November 2022
	SMT		Approved	8 December 2022
	Communications <a href="mailto:communications@southandvale.gov.uk">communications@southandvale.gov.uk</a>	Gail Buckle	Approved	14 November 2022
<b>Confidential decision?</b> If so, under which exempt category?	n/a			
<b>Call-in waived by Scrutiny Committee chairman?</b>	n/a			
<b>Has this been discussed by Cabinet members?</b>				
<b>Cabinet portfolio holder's signature</b> To confirm the decision as set out in this notice.	Signature Helen Pighills by email Date _15 December 2022			

**ONCE SIGNED, THIS FORM MUST BE HANDED TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES IMMEDIATELY.**

For Democratic Services office use only	
Form received	Date: 15 December 2022
Date published to all councillors	Date: 19 December 2022
Call-in deadline	Not applicable as this is not a key decision.

## Guidance notes

1. This form must be completed by the lead officer who becomes the contact officer. The lead officer is responsible for ensuring that the necessary internal consultees have signed it off, including the chief executive. The lead officer must then seek the Cabinet portfolio holder's agreement and signature.
2. Once satisfied with the decision, the Cabinet portfolio holder must hand-sign and date the form and return it to the lead officer who should send it to Democratic Services immediately to allow the call-in period to commence.  
Tel. 01235 422520 or extension 2520.  
Email: [democratic.services@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@southandvale.gov.uk)
3. Democratic Services will then publish the decision to the website (unless it is confidential) and send it to all councillors to commence the call-in period (five clear working days) if it is a 'key' decision (see the definition of a 'key' decision below). A key decision cannot be implemented until the call-in period expires. The call-in procedure can be found in the council's constitution, part 4, under the Scrutiny Committee procedure rules.
4. Before implementing a key decision, the lead officer is responsible for checking with Democratic Services that the decision has not been called in.
5. If a key decision has been called in, Democratic Services will notify the lead officer and decision-maker. This call-in puts the decision on hold.
6. Democratic Services will liaise with the Scrutiny Committee chairman over the date of the call-in debate. The Cabinet portfolio holder will be requested to attend the Scrutiny Committee meeting to answer the committee's questions.
7. The Scrutiny Committee may:
  - refer the decision back to the Cabinet portfolio holder for reconsideration or
  - refer the matter to Council with an alternative set of proposals (where the final decision rests with full Council) or
  - accept the Cabinet portfolio holder's decision, in which case it can be implemented immediately.

## Key decisions: assessing whether a decision should be classified as 'key'

The South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils' Constitutions now have the same definition of a key decision:

**A key decision is a decision of the Cabinet, an individual Cabinet member, or an officer acting under delegated powers, which is likely:**

- (a) to incur expenditure, make savings or to receive income of more than £75,000;**

- (b) to award a revenue or capital grant of over £25,000; or**
- (c) to agree an action that, in the view of the chief executive or relevant head of service, would be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising more than one ward in the area of the council.**

Key decisions are subject to the scrutiny call-in procedure; non-key decisions are not and can be implemented immediately.

In assessing whether a decision should be classified as 'key', you should consider:

- (a) Will the expenditure, savings or income total more than £75,000 across all financial years?
- (b) Will the grant award to one person or organisation be more than £25,000 across all financial years?
- (c) Does the decision impact on more than one district council ward? And if so, is the impact significant? If residents or property affected by the decision is in one ward but is close to the border of an adjacent ward, it may have a significant impact on that second ward, e.g. through additional traffic, noise, light pollution, odour. Examples of significant impacts on two or more wards are:
  - Decisions to spend Didcot Garden Town funds (significant impact on more than one ward)
  - Changes to the household waste collection policy (affects all households in the district)
  - Reviewing a housing strategy (could have a significant impact on residents in many wards)
  - Adopting a supplementary planning document for a redevelopment site (could significantly affect more than one ward) or a new design guide (affects all wards)
  - Decisions to build new or improve existing leisure facilities (used by residents of more than one ward)

**The overriding principle is that before 'key' decisions are made, they must be published in the Cabinet Work Programme for 28 calendar days. Classifying a decision as non-key when it should be a key decision could expose the decision to challenge and delay its implementation.**