

**EXECUTIVE DECISION RECORD**

**REF No 420.22**

<b>A1</b> Service Area	Revenues, Benefits & Customer Contacts
<b>A2</b> Title	Homes for Ukraine – payments to Guests
<b>A3</b> Decision Taken By	Leader/ Chief Officer
<b>A4</b> Chief Officer	Please print name: Mark Rizk  Please sign name: <a href="#">Approval by email 250422</a>
<b>A5</b> Leader / Deputy Leader	Please print name: Cllr G Allen  Please sign name: <a href="#">Approval by email 250422</a>
<b>A6</b> Date of Decision	27 <sup>th</sup> April 2022

**Confidentiality**

<b>A7</b> Is this Decision confidential by containing exempt information as described in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972?	No
<b>A7.1</b> If yes, please state relevant paragraph from Schedule 12A LGA 1972.	

**Scrutiny**

**A8** Which Scrutiny Committee should this decision be submitted to? *(Please tick as appropriate)* ✓

Scrutiny (Audit & Value for Money Council Services) Committee

Scrutiny (Community Regeneration, Environment and Health and Well Being) Committee X

<b>B1</b> What is the Decision?	To approve the proposed interim procedure for making the necessary £200 payments to Guests that have arrived in East Staffordshire under the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme.
<b>B1</b> What is the Decision?	To approve the proposed interim procedure for making the necessary £200 payments to Guests that have arrived in East Staffordshire under the Government's Homes for Ukraine scheme.

**B2** What are the reasons for the Decision?

The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched by the Govt on 14 March 2022. It is open to Ukrainian nationals who were residents in Ukraine prior to 1 January 2022 and also their immediate family member. (Further guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils>).

Under the scheme, UK individuals (Sponsors) can put themselves forward to house Guests and are required to undergo various DBS and Safeguarding checks to ensure both they and their property are suitable before being matched with Guests. Sponsors which meet all checks are offered a monthly 'thank you' payment of £350 for as long as the Guest is resident at their property or for at least 12 months (whichever is the longest). Guests arriving in suitable approved accommodation are entitled to a cash payment of £200 (each) to enable them to buy essential goods until they can access benefits for longer term stays.

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) is responsible for administering the scheme across Staffordshire, with the Districts responsible for completing checks on the accommodation and issuing payments to Sponsors and Guests. East Staffordshire Borough Council's (ESBC) Environmental Health officers have been conducting property checks, and officers within Revenues, Benefits & Customer Contacts are responsible for issuing payments. SCC relies on all relevant checks to be completed and approved before payments are issued – this is so that they (SCC) can receive from Govt funding of £10,500 per person settled with a Sponsor and reimburse Districts for the approved payments that have been issued.

The Govt has devised a 'Foundry' portal where details of Sponsors and Guests across the UK are held, and it is the responsibility of Local Authorities to manage cases for their areas through that portal. Some ESBC officers have access whilst others are still waiting for DHLUC to authorise and provide access. Officers have been able to update Foundry with accommodation checks, but no safeguarding or DBS checks have yet been confirmed as completed by SCC. Officers are required to issue payments only when approvals have been given

by SCC, dependant on all checks being completed.

However, due to the length of time being taken on safeguarding and DBS checks, officers are concerned that it will take too long for payments to be issued, particularly the £200 payment to Guests who are in need of urgent financial support due to circumstances beyond their control.

Guests are able to claim Universal Credit (UC), but claimants need a National Insurance number (NINo) to be eligible for UC. According to <https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number>, it takes around 8 weeks for a NINo to be issued. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) states that claims normally are paid around 5 weeks after they are initially made, (although they are willing to fast-track Guest claims as far as they can when made aware). This means that Guests could be waiting 3 months before getting access to financial support. UC claimants can request Advance Payments in urgent cases that need financial support whilst the claim is being assessed (and once they have acquired a NINo in order to make a claim), however those payments will be clawed back through future UC payments.

Officers are aware that 9 Guests have arrived in East Staffordshire, the first arriving on 5 April 2022. Neither Guests nor their Sponsors have received any financial support yet. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly urgent that payments are issued as soon as possible.

Whilst it is accepted that SCC will only reimburse payments issued to approved Sponsors and Guests, it can be argued that the payments to Guests should be issued as soon as practically possible (whether approved by SCC or not) to avoid any further financial distress. There is a risk to the Borough Council in that payments could be issued to Guests where further down the line it is identified that SCC have decided not to approve it. However, as ESBC officers are conducting accommodation checks they may be able to identify cases which are not suitable, eg where the property fails an accommodation check.

	<p>It is proposed that, as an interim procedure, any Guest payments ESBC issues would be In accordance with the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ESBC officers have completed a pre arrival accommodation check which identified no issues or concerns;</li> <li>➤ The Guest has arrived in the UK – as indicated on Foundry;</li> <li>➤ ESBC officers have verified with the Guest that they have been given a visa under the Govt’s Homes for Ukraine scheme and their ID has been checked.</li> </ul> <p><u>Recommendation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That the proposal for an interim payment procedure for Guest payments (£200 per guest) to be made under the Homes for Ukraine scheme be approved.</li> <li>• That these interim arrangements be kept under review by the Chief Officer.</li> </ul>
<p><b>B3</b> What are the contributions to Corporate Priorities?</p>	<p>This document contributes to Environment and Health &amp; Wellbeing priority.</p>
<p><b>B4</b> What are the Human Rights considerations?</p>	<p>There are no Human Rights issues arising from this decision.</p>

### Financial Implications

<p><b>B5</b> What are the financial implications?</p>	<p>The main financial issues arising from this decision are as follows:</p> <p>In the interim period, until the joint operating model is finalised, the Council will be issuing payments that have not been fully approved by SCC. There is a risk that the Council will not be reimbursed for those payments, although this is minimised by the procedures set out above.</p> <p>As set out above, the Chief Officer will keep these interim arrangements under review in order to minimise the financial risk to the authority.</p> <p>In the event that a small amount of the payments are not reimbursed this can be met from Housing Options funding.</p>
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<p>The finance section has been approved by the following member of the Financial Management Unit:</p>	<p>Please print name: Lisa Turner, Chief Accountant</p> <p>Please sign name: <a href="#">Approval by email 250422</a></p>
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### Policy Framework

<p><b>B6</b> Is the Decision wholly in accordance with the Council's policy framework?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>B6.1</b> If No, does it fall within the urgency provisions (Part 3 of the Constitution)?</p>	<p>NA</p>
<p><b>B6.2</b> Has it got the appropriate approvals under those provisions?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>B7</b> Is the Decision wholly in accordance with the Council's budget?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>B7.1</b> If No, does it fall within the urgency provisions (Part 3 of the Constitution)?</p>	<p>NA</p>
<p><b>B7.2</b> Has it got the appropriate approvals under those provisions?</p>	<p>NA</p>

## Equalities Implications

<b>B8</b> What are the Equalities implications:
<b>B8.1</b> Positive (Opportunities/Benefits):
<b>B8.2</b> Negative (Threats):
<b>B8.3</b> The subject of this decision is not a policy, strategy, function or service that is new or being revised. An equality impact assessment is not required
<b>B8.4</b>

## Risk Assessment

<b>B9</b> What are the Risk Assessment implications: As set out below.
<b>B9.1</b> Positive (Opportunities/Benefits): The provision of urgently needed support under the national scheme.
<b>B9.2</b> Negative (Threats): That all of the payments made under the interim arrangements are not fully reimbursed by SCC.
<b>B9.3</b> The risks do not need to be entered in the Risk Register

## Legal Considerations

<b>B10</b> What are the Legal Considerations:
<b>B10.1</b> These are contained within the main body of the Report.  Further, under s2 (1) Local Government Act 2000, the Council has the power to do anything for the promotion or improvement of the social or economic well-being of the inhabitants in its area. This includes, amongst other measures, providing financial assistance.  By s2 (2) (b), this includes any person resident in the area of the local authority.
This section has been approved by the following member of the Legal Team Please print name: John Teasdale/G McCusker
Please sign name: <a href="#">Approval by email 220422</a>

## Sustainability Implications

<b>B11</b> What are the Sustainability implications: N/A
<b>B11.1</b> The proposal would result in an overall positive effect in terms of sustainability (including climate change and change adaptation measures). The positive/negative impacts are set out below N/A
<b>B11.2</b> Positive (Opportunities/Benefits):
<b>B11.3</b> Negative (Threats):

## Health & Safety Implications

<b>B12</b> What are the Health & Safety implications:
<b>B12.1</b> A Risk Assessment has not been carried out and entered into Safety Media for all significant hazards and risks because there are no significant hazards or risks arising from this decision.
<b>B12.2</b> [The significant hazards and risks have been identified in the Safety Media Risk Assessment numbered [ ]. Any financial implications to mitigate against these hazards and risks are considered above.]
<b>B12.3</b> [Control measures and an action plan have been identified for any significant hazards and risks identified in the risk assessment. The positive/negative impacts are set out below]
<b>B12.3.1</b> Positive (Benefits) N/a
<b>B12.3.2</b> Negative (Threats) N/A



## Key Decision

**B13** Is this a Key Decision?      No

**Note: A Key Executive Decision is one where:**

1. **REVENUE** – Any contract or proposal with an annual payment or saving of more than £100,000
2. **CAPITAL** – Any capital project with a value in excess of £150,000
3. A decision which significantly affects communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards.

<b>B13.1</b> If this is a Key Decision, is this an urgent decision such that a delay caused by use of the Call-in Procedure would <u>seriously</u> prejudice the public interest?	NA
<b>B13.2</b> If yes, has the Mayor or in his/her absence the Deputy Mayor or in his/her absence the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Committee agreed that the decision will be exempt from Call-in?	NA

**NOTE:** If this decision is subject to the Call-in Procedure it will come into force, and may then be implemented, on the expiry of 3 working days after publication – unless 10 Members of the Council call in the decision.

Please send the original signed document to [andrea.davies@eaststaffsbc.gov.uk](mailto:andrea.davies@eaststaffsbc.gov.uk)