

CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 10
10 JULY 2023	PUBLIC REPORT

Report of:	Cecilie Booth, Executive Director of Corporate Services		
Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Andy Coles, Cabinet Member for Legal, Finance and Corporate Services		
Contact Officer(s):	Felicity Paddick, Head of Estates	Tel. 07801 910971	

ACQUISITION OF HOMES

RECOMMENDATIONS	
FROM: <i>Executive Director of Corporate Services</i>	Deadline date: <i>N/A</i>
<p>It is recommended that Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Approves the acquisition of 25 houses (full details of the individual properties will be developed as the acquisitions progress in due course) as set out in the exempt Appendix 1 for ownership by the Council to support the refugee resettlement programme. Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Service and Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Legal, Finance and Corporate Services, to take all necessary steps to facilitate the decision in Recommendation 1 including approving the final terms of each acquisition and entering into any necessary agreements. 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet following a referral from the S151 Finance Officer.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

2.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the acquisition of up to 25 homes to support the refugee resettlement programme as detailed in this report and exempt annex.

2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.3, '*To determine any key decision...*'

2.3 There is an exempt appendix attached to this report that is NOT FOR PUBLICATION by reason of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 because it contains information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council. The public interest test has been applied to the information contained within this exempt annex and it is considered that the need to retain the information as exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

3. TIMESCALES

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A
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4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 Peterborough City Council have secured funding through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to secure homes as part of its refugee resettlement programme, and in particular to support Afghanistan and Ukraine. The details of the funding are stated in the exempt annex. The fund aims to alleviate housing pressures on local authorities arising from recent and unforeseen conflicts in both Afghanistan and Ukraine and to support areas which have generously welcomed substantial numbers of refugees.

The timescales of the funding, require the Council to purchase the properties by November 2023. Due to the strict timescale requirements, the Council is being supported by an agent who will inspect and negotiate on behalf of the Council, prior to officer review and approval.

The acquisition of these properties will not require the Council to set up a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) at this stage.

Support for refugees

The Council receives grant funding from Government to provide support and integration for refugees resettled under the national schemes. The Council has commissioned two local charities to provide day-to-day casework support and assist refugees to integrate into the UK and Peterborough.

Support includes helping refugees to:

- Open a bank account
- Access health and social care services
- Access education and adult skills training
- Learn English, including gaining formal accredited English qualifications
- Understand UK laws, culture and behaviours
- Understand their rights and responsibilities, particularly in managing their tenancy
- Develop money management and budgeting skills
- Apply for welfare benefits
- Find employment and access support to become work ready
- Integrate into Peterborough and access social and community opportunities

As advised above, a local agent is supporting in the acquisitions of the properties. In addition, the agent will also provide a tenancy management service for a period of twelve months from the date of acquisitions. The position will be reviewed in 6-9 months and consideration will be given to either the Council taking on the management responsibility or to retain with an external agent.

5. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 5.1 The recommendation links to the following Council's Corporate Priorities:

1. The Economy & Inclusive Growth
 - Environment – a Carbon Impact Assessment has been completed. In the event any works are required to the property, this enables the Council to consider significant energy consumption improvements to assets.
 - Homes and Workplaces – the Council is committed to providing safe and suitable housing to individuals and families as part of the refugee resettlement programme.

Further information on the Council's Priorities can be found here - [Link to Corporate Strategy and Priorities Webpage](#)

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 Consultation has taken place with Officers, the Corporate Leadership Team on the 21 June 2023, and Cabinet Policy Forum on the 26 June 2023.

7. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

7.1 The outcome will enable the Council to acquire properties on a freehold basis which will support the refugee resettlement programme whilst there is a demand. In the event, the properties are no longer required for this purpose, the homes can be allocated as temporary accommodation or similar.

8. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Following the acquisition of the homes, this will enable the Council to continue to support the refugee resettlement programme.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 The Council could choose not to accept the grant funding and therefore decide not to proceed with the acquisition. However, this could have a detrimental impact on the Council with any further bidding opportunities and would also increase the Council's costs relating to providing housing for refugees.

10. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

10.1 The acquisition of these homes has been incorporated into the Council's 2023/24 capital programme.

The overall financial impact of this proposal is as detailed within section 1 of the exempt annex, including the composition of funding sources to support this project.

Legal Implications

10.2 The Council has powers to acquire land for the purposes set out in the report acquisition under section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972:-

For purposes noted under (1) (a) and (b) & (2)

"A principal council may acquire by agreement any land for any purpose for which they are authorised by this or any other enactment to acquire land, notwithstanding that the land is not immediately required for that purpose; and, until it is required for the purpose for which it was acquired, any land acquired under this subsection may be used for the purpose of any of the council's functions "

The Council is seeking advice in relation to future HRA implications (if applicable).

Equalities Implications

10.3 No specific implications arising from this report although where necessary Equality Impact assessments will be carried out to support decision making.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

11.1 None.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix 1 – Exempt Annex