

Item 7

Update on Refugees

ECC expect 20-25 families to settle in Essex over the course of the 2016/17 financial year. Four families have arrived so far, all in Colchester.

The first family for Uttlesford is expected in September 2016. Planning is underway between ECC, UDC and WE CCG so confirmation can be given to the government by mid-July that arrangements are in place for September arrival. The current assumption is for a minimum of 3 families across West Essex. So far, in addition to a suitable property in Uttlesford, another has been identified in Epping Forest.

ECC has commissioned Migrant Help to support families arriving in Sept 2016 in West Essex. This covers pre-arrival support planning with partners, providing the initial reception and ongoing wraparound support post arrival for a 12 month period. UDC and EFDC officers have agreed to identify key operational contacts in their Housing Services for Migrant Help to contact post case acceptance. Migrant Help will, where required, be furnishing and equipping the houses in the 6 week intervening period prior to arrival. This is to ensure that the Government statement of requirements will be met. Provision of additional equipment and services e.g. computer or access to Broadband (to assist school age children to do homework) will be taken forward by Migrant Help via offers of charitable help. Migrant Help has already approached inter faith groups in West Essex for additional capacity and support. Migrant Help would flex its resources and support resettlements as required, even if family numbers increase between now and final confirmations. Migrant Help will be providing a similar role to the performed by Fresh Beginnings who will continue to support resettlement in Colchester Borough. Migrant Help has been provided with local contacts including a good furniture re-use scheme in Epping Forest and the respective CVS in Uttlesford and Epping for signposting Migrant Help to local groups.

ECC are dependent on Government to find out expected dates of future arrivals. The current indication from Government is that the next arrivals after September 2016 might be in January 2017.

Colchester is the only area in Essex to have resettled families thus far under the national scheme; it has been a positive experience so far, although still at early stages for families. The main challenge pre-arrival is the need for suitable and sustainable properties being identified at viable rent levels, which effectively rules out private sector rented stock in Uttlesford.

There has been no problem so far with schools. Children are being offered language support, as are adults via Adult Community Learning.