

FULL COUNCIL – 14 OCTOBER 2015

Written question from Councillor Geoff Lumley to Councillor Jonathan Bacon, Leader and Executive Member for Resources and Children's Services

Can the Leader update Full Council on what the current position is in regard to the Isle of Wight offering to possibly accommodate Syrian families on the Isle of Wight? In September your administration was waiting until you received further information and guidance from Government before making a decision as you required assurance from the Government that the whole life costs of accommodating any refugees would be supported. Have you received that information?

Response

It is frustrating to me that the council is still waiting for confirmation from government about the funding arrangements for resettling Syrian refugees in the UK. Only as recently as the 2 October Richard Harrington MP, the Minister for Syrian Refugees, wrote to the Leaders of all councils and set out, "I know that funding is important for your planning and there is work to do to develop the details. My team and I are looking forward to working with you further on this point". He also confirmed that the first 12 months of a refugee's settlement costs are to be fully funded by central government using the overseas aid budget.

The Home Office guidance note which accompanied the letter suggested a number of areas which councils new to resettlement should consider before engaging with the process. These include an analysis of whether the area has the infrastructure and support networks necessary to ensure the appropriate care and integration of refugees. Not having been a resettlement area before this is an important consideration for us if we are to be as effective and supportive as I know we would all like to be in helping the plight of these people. It may take us a disproportionate level of costs to establish a strong, robust and sustainable support network for the refugees and we would want to be assured that we have sufficient funds available to secure their successful integration into the Island's community.