

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 4 October 2018	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Equalities and Communities
<b>Report title:</b>		Southwark Council consent for the Peckham Sponsors Refugees full community sponsorship application	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>From:</b>		Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation	

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for culture, leisure, equalities and communities gives local authority consent to Peckham Sponsors Refugees' application to the UK Government for its full community sponsorship application.
2. That the deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for culture, leisure, equalities and communities writes to Peckham Sponsors Refugees giving notification of Southwark Council's consent.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. In September 2015 the UK government pledged to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees via the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) scheme. The Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) aims to help refugees affected by the conflict in Syria, focusing on those in the greatest need, including people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk.
4. The UK Government's "Full Community Sponsorship" scheme was introduced in July 2016. It enables community groups to become directly involved in supporting the resettlement of refugees fleeing conflict and in need of protection. It aimed to encourage innovation in resettlement into the UK and promote positive resettlement outcomes, both for the resettled families and local communities.
5. Potential community sponsorship organisations in England and Wales must have status as either a charity registered with the Charities Commission, be an individual or body falling within section 10(2)(a) of the Charities Act 2011 or a community interest company registered with Companies House. Under UK Government guidance, the organisation must be a named individual with responsibility for the sponsorship arrangement, the 'lead sponsor'.
6. The lead sponsor should hold a permanent and senior position within the organisation. There must be a clear line of accountability between the lead sponsor and the personnel delivering the resettlement plan.

7. The UK Government's Home Office will approve every community sponsorship organisation. A separate approval is required for each resettled family that is to be sponsored. Under UK Government guidance, the approval process is "designed to establish that the prospective sponsor:
  - a) has sufficient resources (housing, financial and personnel) to support a resettled family;
  - b) has a credible plan for supporting a resettled family, backed by relevant experience; and
  - c) does not present a risk to the resettled family".
8. Community sponsorship organisations must have the consent of the local authority in the area where the resettled family will live. Written evidence must be provided by the local authority in a format by the local authority.

### **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

9. Peckham Sponsors Refugees (PSR) is a group of more than a hundred people living in Peckham who have come together to bring a vulnerable Syrian refugee family to live in Peckham through the Government's Community Sponsorship Scheme. PSR states that "rather than facing a dangerous journey across the sea, a family who have lived through a civil war and lost everything will come directly from a refugee camp in the Middle East".
10. PSR has spent the last few months "working together to find a house, raise funds, plan everything needed for the family's arrival, create a comfortable home for them, meet them at the airport and show them around the area so that they can settle in". PSR is committed to "arranging for them to have English lessons, helping them to find work and continue to support them in any way we can" and "most of all ensuring they feel welcome in our friendly community so that Peckham continues to provide a welcome for all refugees and asylum seekers who find themselves here".
11. As a community sponsor, PSR will be allocated a family fleeing conflict, and it PSR's responsibility to support the resettled family from the moment of arrival in the UK. This will include:
  - meeting the family at the airport;
  - providing a warm welcome and cultural orientation;
  - providing housing
  - supporting access to medical and social services;
  - supporting English language tuition; and
  - support towards employment and self-sufficiency.
12. "Sponsor Refugees" Citizens UK's foundation for Sponsorship of Refugees will act as the lead sponsor for the PSR application.
13. PSR has set out a detailed resettlement plan, covering:
  - Registering for school places
  - Working relationship with the Southwark Council's Syrian refugee caseworker based in the Communities Division

- Links with Southwark Council’s Early Help and Adult Social Care services
  - Primary healthcare
  - Secondary healthcare and additional physical, mental health and wellbeing services
  - Interpreting services
  - Provision of English language tutoring by a fully qualified ESOL tutor
  - Provision of informal English conversation classes for children and adults
  - Engagement with Southwark police/Safer Neighbourhood Team
  - Securing biometric residence permit;
  - Understanding of relevant benefits and plan for immediate sign up
  - Engagement with JobCentrePlus
  - Plan for setting up a bank account
  - Engagement with local refugee organisations;
  - Engagement with Greater London Authority Syrian Resettlement Team to identify areas of Syrian refugee communities within London
  - Liaising with local mosques
  - Local amenities and activities
  - Housing
  - Welcome team, including “Welcome Folder” and “Welcome Pack”
  - Safeguarding policy
  - Confirmation of partnership with a registered charity
  - Confirmation of sufficient funds raised.
14. Officers have reviewed the plan and are of the view that it is a comprehensive plan, covering all aspects of resettlement with key contacts established and resources and plans put in place for each part of the resettlement. Evidence has been provided for the required fundraising and its plans around safeguarding.

### **Policy implications**

15. There are no policy implications arising from this report.

### **Community impact statement**

16. Peckham Sponsors Refugees is a community-led initiative. It has developed from a groundswell of community opinion in Peckham that it is important to try and do something to support the plight of people displaced by the conflict in Syria. The London Borough of Southwark is a diverse borough and we regard the diversity of our community as one of our most valued assets. Households will be fleeing a war zone, they are likely to have significant support needs, including potentially psychological issues. Therefore it is essential that sufficient tailored support is considered for each potential household, with the project drawing on the support and expertise of the public and voluntary and community sectors in the borough, including making links with existing charities and community organisations.

### **Resource implications**

17. Consent for the PSR application will require some ongoing officer support from the Community Support Unit in the Communities Division. This will be met from the existing Communities Division budget. Support from some of the council’s services will be required to the resettled family – including the Education Division, Children’s Social Care and Adult Social Care. As well as funding being made available in the usual way for school places, specific funding will be available by

the UK government to support education and health providers, which can be accessed by the providers for each resettled family.

### **Legal implications**

18. Supplementary advice from the director of law and democracy is included in the paragraphs below. The legal implications will be kept under review throughout the development of the proposals.

### **Financial implications**

19. Other than the resources implications outlined above, there are no expected additional financial implications arising from the recommendations.

### **Consultation**

20. There are no plans to consult on this consent.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Director of Law and Democracy**

21. None

### **Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (FIN1073 – JB)**

22. The report recommends providing local authority consent to Peckham Sponsors Refugees application to the UK Government for its full community sponsorship proposal.
23. The report notes that local authority support for the applicant group will be provided within existing service budgets and specific additional funding is available to education and health providers. Where applicable this funding should be accessed by service providers.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

<b>Background Papers</b>
Full community sponsorship guidance for prospective sponsors  Link (please copy and paste into your browser): <a href="https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/626810/Community_sponsorship_guidance_for_prospective_sponsors_July_2017.pdf">https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/626810/Community_sponsorship_guidance_for_prospective_sponsors_July_2017.pdf</a>

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Peckham Sponsors Refugees resettlement plan
Appendix 2	Peckham Sponsors Refugees safeguarding policy
Appendix 3	Peckham Sponsors Refugees confirmation of current funds

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Lead Officer</b>	Stephen Douglass, Director of Communities	
<b>Report Author</b>	Alex Irvine, Community Support Officer	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	4 October 2018	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	3 October 2018	