

## Notice of Non-key Executive Decision

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Top Up Payments for Ukrainian Sponsors
<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Patrick Odling-Smee
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr. Gillian Ford
<b>ELT Lead:</b>	Patrick Odling-Smee
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Lee Watson <a href="mailto:Lee.watson@havering.gov.uk">Lee.watson@havering.gov.uk</a>
<b>Policy context:</b>	To provide top up payments for sponsors who are accommodating Ukrainian guests
<b>Financial summary:</b>	The expected cost for 26/27 is £84,400 which will be fully funded from existing Homes for Ukraine grant
<b>Relevant OSC:</b>	Peoples OSC
<b>Is this decision exempt from being called-in?</b>	The decision will be exempt from call in as it is a Non key Decision

### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well X

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

## Part A – Report seeking decision

### DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

Recommend to approve top up payments for sponsors who are currently accommodating Ukrainian guests in the borough.

### AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

#### Scheme 3.3.3

#### Powers common to all Strategic Directors

##### 1. General

- 1.1 To take any steps, and take any decisions, necessary for the proper management and administration of their allocated directorate, in accordance with applicable Council policies and procedures.

As notified to the Monitoring Officer in sub delegations from 3 April 2024 onwards

### STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which displaced millions of civilians. The government framed Homes for Ukraine as a way to provide immediate sanctuary to people fleeing an active war, particularly women, children, and older people who could not safely remain in Ukraine.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmpubacc/69/report.html>

Homes for Ukraine allowed Ukrainians to come to the UK without going through the standard asylum system, giving them rapid access to housing, healthcare, education, work, and benefits. This was intended to meet urgent humanitarian needs rather than create a long-term refugee resettlement pathway.

As part of the support packages under the Home for Ukraine Scheme a sponsorship payment scheme was introduced. The main purpose of the Homes for Ukraine sponsor thank you grant is to support local authorities to make monthly thank you payments direct to sponsoring households within the scheme for 2 years, or for up to 3 years where relevant for children and minors not travelling with or joining their parent or guardian in the UK. The government

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Sponsoring households are eligible to receive £350 per month (for a guest's first 12 months) and were until May 2024 to receive a top up of £500 per month (after 12 months of a guest's stay in the UK and up to 24 months).

In May 2024 the Government changed the guidance saying that from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 there would be no 'top up' payment and that all sponsorships would receive £350 regardless how long they would have their guests. Havering decided to continue with the top up payments from 25/26 of £500 as this affected 33 sponsors who are housing 46 Ukrainian guests, which had a risk of the sponsor asking their guests to leave and putting a pressure on temporary accommodation costs.

In February 2024, the Government made an announcement that the Ukrainian people can extend their visa by 18 months under a Ukrainian Permission Extension (UPE) scheme. All our Ukrainian guest took up the offer. The Government has announced that another 18 months extension (UPE2) can be applied for and will be granted, however under this scheme sponsors will not be receiving a payment. This decision will apply to 25 guests that we have in the borough, who visas under UPE1 will have run out and will be going onto UPE2 in October 26. This will impact 16 sponsors (who are currently receiving £500 per month)

The report is asking for approval to:

Continue the top up of the grant to £500 per month (we will receive £350 towards this amount from the grant on a quarterly basis) for the 33 sponsors that have been housing 46 guests on the visa and UPE1 pathway in the borough.

To continue to pay £500 per month for those 16 sponsors in the borough that will not be entitled to receive any payment. (we will not be entitled any grant for this).

### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

The other option considered is to not pay the top up and payments. This is rejected as the sponsor is entitled to ask their guests to leave their accommodation. This will put additional pressure on the Council's temporary accommodation budget. The average nightly paid accommodation is £83 per night or £581 per week, therefore paying £500 per month is more cost effective.

### **PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION**

The Leader of the Council has been kept informed of the requirements that local councils have in providing support to families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities.

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**NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER**

Name: Lee Watson

Designation: Refugee and Crisis Response Manager

Signature: 

Date: 16.02.26

## Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

### LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- 1.1. The Homes for Ukraine scheme is a non-statutory scheme for which guidance is published by the DLUHC . (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homes-for-ukraine-guidance-for-councils#:~:text=Background%20and%20eligibility,-The%20Homes%20for&text=This%20scheme%20is%20open%20to,to%20come%20to%20the%20UK>)
- 1.2. Essentially the Council received a grant of £10,500 per refugee in 2022 (£5,900 per refugee from 1 January 2023) to cover administration of payments to sponsors, and services to ensure rapid integration. Whilst the grant is not ring fenced it is subject to conditions including provision of data returns, and that the Authority “*must commission or provide services that ensure guests and sponsors are provided with a source of advice and support to assist with registering for mainstream benefits and services, including where necessary specialist public health services and community integration.*”
- 1.3. It is funded directly by the Homes for Ukraine grant tariff by MHCLG. Failure to comply with grant conditions could lead to a demand for repayment to MHCLG
- 1.4. Provision of the Homes for Ukraine scheme is an expectation of central government in supporting the relief effort as a result of the war in Ukraine and power to deliver this is within the general power of competence pursuant to section 1 Localism Act 2011. The Homes for Ukraine scheme does not replace or contradict Council’s statutory duties or responsibilities.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This decision paper seeks approval to continue the top- up payments for sponsors accommodating Ukrainian guests. The total estimated cost for 2026/27 is £84,400, which will be fully funded from the existing MHCLG Homes for Ukraine grant.

There are currently 33 sponsors receiving monthly top- up payments of £150. Continuing these payments into 2026/27 is expected to cost £60,600.

Under the revised guidance, 16 sponsors in the borough will no longer receive payments in 2026/27 when a guest moves into UPE2. Under this proposal, these sponsors would continue to receive £500 per month, an additional £350 per sponsor at an estimated annual cost of £23,800.

Continuing these payments will help reduce the risk of guests needing to be placed in costly nightly paid temporary accommodation, which averages £83 per night (approximately £2,500 per month). Supporting sponsors remains a significantly more cost- effective option.

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### **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)**

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce

### **EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There is no environmental and climate change implications and risks

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### **APPENDICIES**

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**Part C – Record of decision**

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

**Decision**

Proposal agreed

**Details of decision maker**

Signed



Name: Patrick Odling-Smee

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date:26/02/26

**Lodging this notice**

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

**For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

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