

## **RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **QUESTION PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 10**

**COUNCIL – 12 JULY 2023**

#### **QUESTION D**

**Councillor Ms Livesey to ask the Communities, Homes, Digital and Communities Portfolio Holder, Councillor Willis:**

“At full Council on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2022, I asked a question about Ukrainian refugees in Rugby at risk of becoming homeless. The answer given by the then Portfolio holder was incorrect, and she promised to write to me with the correct answer. I have had no correspondence on the matter. Will the new portfolio holder for communities, homes, digital and communications, state how many Ukrainian refugees in Rugby are at risk of homelessness, and what is the Council doing to prevent homelessness among our refugee community as of 1 July 2023?”

**Councillor Willis, Communities, Homes, Digital and Communities Portfolio Holder, to reply as follows:**

“I can only apologise that you have not received an answer to your previous enquiry.

I thought it would be helpful to provide a quick overview to give my response some additional context. The number of Ukrainian new arrivals in the borough continues to reduce from its peak in May 2022. Of the 217 guests (as opposed to households) arrived from the start of the scheme through to 30 June 2023, 116 have left the scheme. Of these, 49 have moved into private rented accommodation, 17 into social housing, 6 have moved out of Warwickshire and 44 have either returned to Ukraine or left the scheme.

In terms of homelessness, since the beginning of the scheme 22 families have presented to the Council for advice and have been assisted. Of these, 14 families have been assisted into homes in the Private Rented Sector, with a further 2 either returning to Ukraine or securing their own arrangements for housing. There are 6 families remaining in self-contained temporary accommodation, within the Council’s housing stock. Of these, we have accepted a main duty for 4 families and are still investigating the circumstances of the remaining 2 as per legislative requirements.

The PHIL Ukraine team (funded by WCC until 31 March 2024, employed by North Warks BC and utilised across the districts and boroughs) are continuing their work in proactively reaching out to the remaining guests to understand the situation around their current housing circumstances and then prioritise follow up on a risk basis. This is an early-stage intervention approach.

In addition, WCC has employed support officers to enable access to education, health etc.

A variety of interventions are put in place to prevent homelessness from occurring:

- The first action is for the County Council to identify an alternative host and broker a potential rematching.
- Mediation is offered, where appropriate, between the host and the guest
- Income maximisation advice is offered, including benefits advice
- Identification of potentially suitable properties in the private sector
- Assessment of affordability to enable access to properties in the private rented sector
- Arrange accompanied viewing of potential properties
- Referral to refugee therapy services for support
- Ongoing support to facilitate transition to new home. A lot of this is provided by the county – for example support with utilities, furniture, emergency welfare assistance.
- Follow up contacts afterwards to ensure ongoing support.

This is a complex operation with the districts, boroughs, county and the VCS working collaboratively to secure best outcomes for our guests.”