

## Decision Report - Executive Decision



Decision Date – 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Key Decision – No

Confidential Information – No

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### Somerset Strategic Migration Board

Executive Member(s): Cllr Bill Revans - Leader of the Council and Lead Member for Governance and Communications

Local Member(s) and Division: All

Lead Officer: Chris Brown - Service Director, Housing

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### Summary / Background

1. The decision is recognition of the Somerset Strategic Migration Board and approval of member representation.
2. For the last 2 years the Displaced People Service along with local partners have been responding to Government policy, announcements and schemes in response to international crises and the displacement of people. The governance and delivery of this work has been coordinated via emergency tactical groups. During 2023 a new governance structure was created, including the introduction of a new strategic board along with 3 operational working groups. The Somerset Strategic Migration Board (SSMB) will be responsible for leading Somerset's multi-agency welcome and response to those who have been globally displaced and find themselves living in Somerset.

### 3. Recommendations

The Executive agrees:

- a. With the establishment of the Somerset Strategic Migration Board as a strategic internal partnership body with member representation and endorse the attached Terms of Reference (Appendix A)
- b. To nominate up to 2 members to sit on this Board

- c. To nominate Cllr Fran Smith, Associate Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Housing to fulfil the role of Chair.

Approval of chair and vice-chair will be agreed by the Somerset Strategic Migration Board on annual basis.

#### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

The Board will create a forward thinking, strategic framework for Somerset's response to Government on migration.

Government is increasingly consulting with local authorities on their capacity and engagement with resettlement programmes, often requiring political sign off

#### **5. Other options considered**

Somerset's response to migration has been largely reactive for 7 years. During the last 2 years however, this has been a multi-agency operational response. With the Government placing more responsibilities on local authorities and partners to deliver support to displaced people, all partners have discussed and agreed that a strategic governance structure is now required alongside the operational delivery of programmes. Other local authorities in the region are moving towards a multi-agency strategic structure to create a long term vision around displacement.

#### **6. Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan**

In line with the County Plan, the Displaced People Service along with partners are committed to addressing local challenges through partnership working, prioritising:

- a) Work across health and care sectors to promote independence and reduce unnecessary demand on services
- a) Welcome and support of displaced people, encouraging them to reach their full potential, by ensuring all children are enrolled in education, adults are supported to access language classes and pathways explored to access higher education, UK qualifications and employment

- b) An environment where people can aspire and achieve without being held back by their background or circumstances.

## **7.Financial and Risk Implications**

All funding in support of displaced people comes from central government. The money is attached to funding instructions, ring-fenced to specific cohorts. Revenue and capital funds are allocated to Somerset Council based on the number of arrivals into the County through various schemes. The SSMB is not a decision-making body on the use of monies.

Key risks associated with the support of displaced people are held on a SSMB risk register. Where appropriate this will be escalated to JCAD the Councils corporate risk register There is no risk associated with this recommendation.

## **8. Legal Implications**

There are no identified legal implications related to this decision

## **9. HR Implications**

There are no identified HR implications.

## **10.Other Implications:**

### **Equalities Implications**

Through its functions the Board will be mindful of the legislation and ethos of the Equality Act 2010 and within this the Public Sector Equality Duty. All Board Members will be expected to conduct themselves within the principles of fairness and integrity as outlined in the Councils Equality Duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty and may require an Equality Impact Assessment to evidence this consideration. Where needed training will be provided to make sure all Board Members fully understand their duties and responsibilities. Any conduct not in keeping with these principles will be dealt with by the Board Chair.

In order for displaced people to thrive and integrate in Somerset it relies on their access to relevant services and support from both statutory and voluntary partners. The SSMB has agreed several objectives including:

- a) To agree one clear, strategic, collaborative approach to welcome and support displaced people in Somerset
- b) To monitor progress made in achieving our vision, purpose and objectives and use this to influence system change and decision making
- c) To support the multi-agency operational working groups that report to the Board, listening to their recommendations for delivery and development

## **11. Community Safety Implications**

In recognition of community safety challenges, the SSMB have set out in their objectives to 'safeguard those who have been displaced and moved to Somerset either by choice or through placement.'

To mitigate the risks of hate crime, Community Safety colleagues are represented on the SSMB both from internal SC colleagues and Avon and Somerset police.

Incidents of hate crime have been low in Somerset, but we continue to prioritise community cohesion in this area of work. Escalation pathways exist within the partnership to ensure that community risks are monitored and lessons learnt.

## **12. Climate Change and Sustainability Implications**

There are no identified climate change or sustainability implications on this recommendation. Consideration will be given to individual decisions made by the SSMB.

## **13. Health and Safety Implications**

There are no identified health and safety implication on this recommendation.

## **14. Health and Wellbeing Implications**

There are no identified health and wellbeing implications for this recommendation.

However the SSMB has identified in its objectives its desire to welcome and support displaced people, this will provide a positive impact on their health and well-being. Protracted periods of displacement leave refugees and asylum

seekers who experience ill health more at risk of serious illness and can increase the gaps in health outcomes. The involvement of the Integrated Care Board and Public Health in SSMB provides an opportunity to tackle health inequalities, giving voice to displaced populations.

## **15. Social Value**

There are no identified social value implications for this recommendation. The voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector is represented on the SSMB. The partnership benefits hugely from their offer of support. Community led welcome and support is vital in promoting inclusion, integration and moving displaced people towards independence.

## **16. Scrutiny comments / recommendations:**

The decision has not gone before scrutiny

## **17. Background**

The Displaced People Service has grown considerably in the last two years. The service has moved from Public Health across to the Communities Directorate under LGR. The staff team has grown from 5 to 20+. The number of service users has increased from 150 to over 2000 individuals moving into Somerset. The work has changed from planned to often an emergency response, from being solely delivered by Somerset Council to being delivered by multi-agency partnerships.

In the light of these significant changes, ongoing Government policy changes around asylum and safe and legal routes, it has been discussed within the existing partnership meetings and proposed that Somerset should prioritise the creation of a Strategic Migration Board to oversee this work.

The Board has representatives from all the key statutory and voluntary sector partners has 3 operational working groups reporting to it including, Asylum, Homes for Ukraine and Resettlement. The following objectives has been approved by the Board:

- a) To safeguard those who have been displaced and moved to Somerset either by choice or through placement
- b) To agree one clear strategic, collaborative approach to welcome and support displaced people in Somerset

- c) To monitor progress made in achieving our vision, purpose and objectives and use this to influence system change and decision making
- d) To support the multi-agency operational working groups that report into the Board, listening to their recommendations for delivery and development
- e) To ensure robust strategic links are in place to other strategies and boards.

## 18. Background Papers

19. The terms of reference for the Strategic Migration Board are in the Appendices

## Appendices

- **A: Somerset Strategic Migration Board – Terms of Reference**

## Assurance checklist (if appropriate)

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark	18/12/23
Communications	Peter Elliott	19/12/23
Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	15/12/23
Workforce	Alyn Jones	2/1/23
Asset Management	Oliver Woodhams	2/1/23
Executive Director / Senior Manager	Chris Hall/Chris Brown	18/12/23
Strategy & Performance	Alyn Jones	2/1/23
Executive Lead Member	Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts	15/12/23
<b>Consulted:</b>	Councillor Name	
Local Division Members		
Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr David Fothergill	04/01/25
Scrutiny Chair	Cllr Gwil Wren	04/01/25

## **SOMERSET STRATEGIC MIGRATION BOARD**

### **Terms of Reference**

**October 2023**

#### **Purpose**

The Somerset Strategic Migration Board is responsible for leading Somerset's multi-agency welcome and response to those who have been globally displaced and find themselves living in Somerset. The Migration Board will enable local partners to work together in:

- Providing an inclusive welcome to all displaced people regardless of the route or scheme by which they arrive in Somerset
- Delivering strategic coordination in the development and ongoing delivery of services
- Centralising all key strategic decisions associated with displaced people (health, care, housing, employment, education and community integration)
- Working proactively to include the voice of those with lived experience in the design of services

The Migration Board will agree the local strategic direction and vision required to support displaced people, identifying how and where Somerset is able to support this population, ensuring where issues of complexity require an integrated response they are tackled and considered across a range of partner organisations.

#### **Definition of Displaced People**

We use the term 'Displaced People' to refer to refugees and asylum seekers. This does not include other migrants.

- **Asylum Seeker:** Someone who is seeking protection because their home country is unable or unwilling to keep them safe. Until they receive a decision on their asylum claim, they are known as an asylum seeker. Once granted asylum, they become a refugee. Until then, they do not have the same rights as a refugee or a British citizen.

- **Refugee:** Someone who has fled their country of origin because of feared persecution and as a result, require 'international protection'. Refugees are specifically defined and protected in international law.
- **Migrant:** This is an umbrella term used to describe a person who moves within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, for reasons such as work, education or for family.

## Values

- **Collaboration and Co-production:** we can do more together than on our own
- **Creativity and Flexibility:** we should be open to innovation and creativity
- **Integrity:** build on knowledge, listening to one another and prioritise the voice of those with lived experience
- **Experience and Curiosity:** build on previous local experience, be curious and learn from others
- **Solution Focussed:** recognition that it's everyone's business to support those who have been globally displaced, ensuring an inclusive, comprehensive pathway of support

## Objectives

1. To safeguard those who have been displaced, and moved to Somerset either by choice or through placement
2. To agree one clear strategic, collaborative, approach; to welcome and support displaced people in Somerset
3. To monitor progress made in achieving our vision, purpose, and objectives. And use this to influence system change and decision making.
4. To support the multi-agency operational working groups that report into the Board, listening to their recommendations for delivery and development
5. To ensure robust strategic links are in place to other strategies and boards.



There are currently three working groups overseeing the operational delivery and development of three displaced people schemes:

- Asylum Contingency & Dispersal
- Resettlement
- Homes for Ukraine

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

1. Development and delivery of a **Somerset Displaced People Strategy**
2. Maintain engagement with all stakeholders about progress with the approach/programme, successes and issues arising to continue learning and development of the strategic plans.
3. Ensure that the scope of the Board encompasses all aspects of displaced people including individuals, families, those with settled and unsettled status
4. Resolve or escalate any areas of strategic challenge which are impacting on operational delivery mechanisms. Including a duty to challenge where necessary.
5. Through commissioning, partnership and influence, to build on previous success and good practice whilst being open-minded and responsive to emerging initiatives, insight and research, and the implications for future services and interventions.
6. Keep up to date with Government policy, legislative changes, and good practice, responding to consultation where appropriate
7. Interact with local elected members to ensure their awareness of and support of the objectives and ambitions of the Board.
8. Collaborate with Central Government partners and their providers to ensure the effective delivery of schemes in Somerset
9. Continue to develop a communications strategy in support of community cohesion.

## 10. Review and progress learning on an annual basis

### **Membership and Meetings**

Membership of the Somerset Strategic Migration Board includes key sector representatives from the local authority (elected members and / or senior officers), those responsible for other relevant statutory services (NHS, police), voluntary sector organisations working with those who are displaced and central government colleagues and their providers.

Board members need to be sufficiently senior and influential in their own organisations to be able to take strategic decisions at the Board on their organisation's behalf and ensure that actions they commit to on behalf of their organisations are delivered. In addition, Somerset Council will nominate Elected Members to become SSMB representatives, acting as an advocate for the Board and supporting officers to deliver key work programmes.

All members agree to:

- Attend each Somerset Strategic Migration Board meeting, or to send an appropriate delegate
- Review minutes, articles, and briefing papers in preparation for meetings.
- Consider leading any substantive sub-groups identified by the board which are agreed as required to deliver the boards objectives.
- Promote the work of the Board within each member's own organisation
- Ensure service user feedback can be shared through their representing service, agency, or group.

In instances when a poll of views is required to inform the way forward, the complete membership of the group will be consulted to ensure that feedback represents the group as whole.

The Chair and Vice Chair will be agreed by the board annually.

Displaced People Service will support the Chair to ensure that the agenda, minutes, and papers for each meeting are prepared and circulated in good time; and ensure the Terms of Reference are adhered to, including delivering its defined purpose.

The group will meet on a bi-monthly basis initially and then be reviewed. Terms of Reference to be reviewed annually (October of each year)

## **Attendees**

Somerset Council – Adult Social Care – Emily Fulbrook

Somerset Council – Childrens Social Care – Kelly Brewer

Somerset Council – Housing – David Baxter/Jan Errington/Mark Leeman

Somerset Council - Education – Julia Ridge (People) and Phil Curd (Places)

Somerset Council – Community Safety – Lucy Macready

Somerset Council – Public Health – Matthew Hibbert

Somerset Council – Displaced People Service – Lisa Westlake (Service Lead & Chair of Ukraine WG)

Somerset Council – Chair of Resettlement Working Group – Joanne Towle

Somerset Council – Chair of Asylum Working Group – Carolyn Wilkinson

Somerset Council – Councillor vacancy

Somerset Council – Councillor vacancy

NHS – Associate Director for Health Inclusion – Shona Turnbull-Kirk

NHS – Director – Bernice Cooke

Police – Local Policing Area Commander – Chief Inspector Andy Pritchard

CHARIS Refugees – Chief Executive – Gordon East

Spark Somerset – Chief Executive – Katherine Nolan

Home Office – Service Delivery Lead – Karim Ismail

Home Office – Caryl Bond

Home Office – Local Authority Engagement Officer – John Anderson

DLUHC – vacancy

Clearsprings Ready Homes

SW Councils – Partnerships Manager – Kelly-Anne Phillips

**Officer Support**

Suzanne Paine - Business Support Supervisor

**Linked groups and agencies**

Resettlement Working Group

Asylum Contingency and Dispersal Working Group

Homes for Ukraine Working Group

**Governance/Accountability**

The SSMB will report to Executive

The SSMB will hold an annual review to appraise the relevance and value of its work for the coming year.