

**Report to:** Cabinet 15 May 2023

**Lead Cabinet Members:** Councillor Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities

**From:** Councillor Stephen Drew, Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee  
Councillor Graham Cone, Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

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## Update from Scrutiny and Overview Committee

### Purpose

1. This report is to inform Cabinet about relevant discussion among members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at their meeting on 28 March 2023 and ask it to endorse suggestions contained in paragraphs 7 and 8.

### Homes for Ukraine project status and future challenges

2. The Chair and Vice-Chair had specifically requested an opportunity to review this topic and the Committee as a whole was impressed by how the Cabinet and lead officers had responded to the significant challenges posed by such a large project.
3. Committee members noted
  - the recognised but diminishing risk of homelessness as a result of the financial initiatives put in place by the Council and additional resources made possible by support from central government.
  - the variety of options put in place to manage the gap between local housing allowance and local rents, including a buddy scheme allowing Ukrainian guests jointly to seek alternative accommodation, and support from central government enabling the Council to purchase housing for such guests.
  - the good co-ordination between the team supporting Ukrainian guests and the Council's existing housing advice and homelessness service.
  - that central government was supporting the financial implications of increasing demand on existing staff and supported the Council's efforts in employing extra resource regarding the longer-term moving-on

project including the duty to support those guests faced with homelessness.

4. Committee members were reassured to hear that Ukrainian guests seeking Council housing were subject to the same process as other South Cambridgeshire residents.
5. The Lead Cabinet Member for Communities assured the Committee that South Cambridgeshire District Council would continue to do everything it could to support its residents be they permanent or refugees.
6. Committee members were pleased to see the alignment between the many achievements of the Ukrainian guests project and the Council's priorities.

#### **Suggested actions for Cabinet to endorse**

7. **The Scrutiny and Overview Committee emphasises the need to document the considerable number of positive lessons learned, including the benefits of a well-structured and corporate approach.**
8. **Noting that feedback from hosts had been limited so far (possibly because the support from South Cambridgeshire District Council had exceeded expectation) the Scrutiny and Overview Committee nevertheless encourages Cabinet and officers to continue the excellent two-way communication with hosts to seek more feedback and ensure that support remains appropriate and focussed.**

#### **Report Author:**

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