

Northern Rother District Councillors' Report - October 2022.

Asylum Seeker Dispersal

The South East Migration Partnership, who represent the Home Office's various resettlement programmes in the region, have been in consultation with local government councils in recent months as they seek to revise the criteria for dispersing those seeking asylum in the U.K.

Historically, the dispersal of asylum seekers has been focused on specific areas of the country only. The Government recently moved to a system of U.K. wide dispersal following consultation on it's New Plan for Immigration. The consultation has concerned the criteria to be applied when dispersing asylum seekers to accommodation across the U.K. Asylum seeking households are accommodated by the Home Office who source and manage property via third party contractors. The local authority may later become responsible for accommodating households who are successful in their application for asylum and are awarded some form of leave to remain in the country.

In more recent weeks, the South East region has learnt that it is forecast to receive in the region of 7,200 asylum seekers (individuals not households) by December 2023; subsequently, the South East Migration Partnership has launched a separate consultation of local authorities in the South East to inform the draft **Regional Model** they are developing. We have consulted the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Leader in our consultation response, which was required within a very short timeframe earlier this month.

The consultation focuses on two proposed options for apportioning numbers of asylum seekers throughout the South East, in one option those asylum seekers already accommodated in the South East, mainly in hotels or army barracks in Kent and Crawley, are deducted from the overall number the region receives. In the other proposed option, these asylum seekers are not deducted from the overall total. In either scenario, Rother District Council is forecast to welcome approximately 70 people by December 2023. The reason being that those already accommodated in hotels and army barracks are discounted from the overall total allocated to the South East, and the remainder allocated to those areas which have no asylum seekers in this type of interim accommodation. The Council's response has recommended that those asylum seekers already accommodated in hotels and army barracks are discounted from the number the region is expected to welcome by December 2023 overall.

Joe Powell

Head of Housing and Community Services

Village Halls Energy Project

The Village Halls Energy Project (VHEP) aims to reduce the carbon footprints of village and community halls across the district by reducing reliance on oil and gas as a fuel source, and decreasing electricity drawn from the national grid by 2025. An application for £500,000 from Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) [Climate Emergency Bonus Fund] was submitted in June 2022 and approved by the Strategic CIL Allocations Panel in July 2022.

To support the Council's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030, it was important that village and community halls across the district improved their energy costs and reduced their levels of emissions, particularly those fuelled by oil. Also, as a result of inclement weather, these buildings might be needed as potential Rest Centres for the Council in the future.

Following a review, it was clarified that 40 halls were eligible for the VHEP, 37 of which had already confirmed their desire to participate in principle. Efforts had been made to ensure that at least one hall in every Parish area of Rother was invited to participate however to date no eligible venues had been identified in Bodiam (no village hall) or Rye Foreign. It was noted that the eligible venue identified in Ashburnham and Penhurst had declined the opportunity; it was understood that they were currently working on plans to construct a new village hall.

There were two phases to the VHEP, as follows:

Phase 1 – £42,000: to complete site assessments, prioritising measures for energy efficiency and decarbonisation in-line with the energy hierarchy "Lean, Clean and Green". The report identified the criteria for the awards to be determined which was approved by the Climate Change Steering Group on 26 June 2022. A target date of March 2023 had been set to confirm and prioritise the best range of measures for installation within budget.

Phase 2 – £458,000: a procurement process to acquire suitable contractors for the works as detailed in Phase 1. Installations would be completed systematically between June 2023 and May 2024 until the full budget was spent.

The Rother Reduce, Reuse and Recycle 2023 Scheme .

The proposed Rother Reduce, Reuse and Recycle Grants scheme offers funding to Parish and Town Councils and properly constituted community groups and charities who are committed to helping the Rother District to

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle and meet its environmental aims. Funding can be granted for a variety of projects and activities including workshops, practical equipment, education and awareness raising. 11. It is proposed that RDC match funds, pound for pound, relevant expenditure to a limit of £1,000 of grant funding per application. A total fund of £15,000 is cb220905 – CGS Round 1 recommended and would be allocated on a first come, first served basis. A scheme guidance and application questions (online application form) are attached at Appendix B for consideration.

Community Grants Scheme.

The following grants were approved:

1. Brede Parish Council £11,000 £11,000
 2. Fairlight Parish Council £5,060 £5,060
 3. Northiam Village Hall £10,500 £10,500
 4. Rye Harbour Sailability £8,875 £8,875
 5. Winchelsea Beach Community Association £30,000 £30,000
- Total: £65,435.

Technical Advice Notes – First Homes and 100% Affordable Housing.

Officers proposed:

- 1) amendments to the Planning Committee scheme of delegation, to enable proposed increases in affordable housing to be delegated to the Director – Place and Climate Change and determined in accordance with adopted planning policy, as detailed in the 100% Affordable Housing Technical Advice Note, be approved;
- 2) the publication of Technical Advice Notes, to support the Adopted Development Plan be agreed; and
- 3) the Technical Advice Notes relating to First Homes, 100% Affordable Housing and Windows in Bexhill Town Centre be supported.

This a hugely important issue of concern to rural villages such as ours, The proposal would take the decision on 100% affordable

homes out of the hands of the elected members of the Planning Committee and allow officers to take the decision. It was opposed at the Scrutiny Committee led by Cllr. Maynard who made an excellent presentation on why he opposed the proposal, a presentation well worth:

Go to the RDC Website, click on " check it", then "more check it options", then "committees and meetings", then "committees, agendas and minutes, then "overview and scrutiny committee", then "29 Sep 2022", then "view the webcast".

He proposed that the proposal be refused and this was agreed by the committee.

Councillors Tony Ganly and Martin Mooney.