

# Emergency Amendment by the Conservative Group

## City of Edinburgh Council

26 August 2021

### Emergency Motion by the Coalition – Welcoming Afghanistan Refugees

Deletes All and replaces with:

Council:

Notes that unfolding events in Afghanistan, where the UK still has personnel on the ground in Kabul, have been shocking to witness and recognises the UK Government is assisting to evacuate thousands of Afghans within the constrained time limit set by the US Federal Government, following the US President's decision to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan.

Welcomes the endeavours of a number of countries in the evacuation efforts in addition to the UK and USA including, but not limited to Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Italy, Poland, Switzerland and Turkey and the unprecedented mobilisation of military resources to allow for evacuation and accepts the long-term humanitarian effort required internationally.

Acknowledges that many UK veterans who served in Afghanistan will find the deteriorating security situation extremely difficult and lead them to question the sacrifices they and their colleagues have made and calls on the Veterans' Champion to play a significant role in backing the provision of any support required by them in this regard.

Supports the people of Afghanistan in enjoying the liberties previously protected by allied forces and the right to independence of thought, to vote and for women and girls to be educated and play a full part in the work and life of their country.

Recognises (a) that the UK Government's Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) commenced in April, as a replacement for previous resettlement arrangements for those who have helped UK forces over the past two decades offering three different routes to the UK; (b) that the UK Government has pledged to house 5,000 Afghan nationals in its first year in addition to those evacuated by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021, with a view to resettling 20,000 people in the long-term as part

of a full Afghan citizens' resettlement.

Notes ongoing discussions between the Council and the UK Government on arrangements to host a number of Afghan refugees who were locally employed staff as well as ongoing discussions on welcoming further Afghan refugees. Further notes these discussions will include other third/voluntary sector, businesses and Trade Unions to support and welcome refugees along with the Scottish Government.

Agrees the Council will actively support UK Government initiatives to help Afghan refugees and work with neighbouring authorities and other agencies to provide support in terms of signposting education, health, jobs, welfare and generally help Afghan families and individual refugees fully integrate and thrive as part of the community.

Notes the funding arrangements for the formerly locally employed staff and agrees the Council leader and officers continue dialogue with UK Ministers and officials to ensure support is fully funded by the UK Government and delegates to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader, to approve any such other costs arising not covered by UK Government funding, or existing budgets, up to £500,000 from the unallocated general reserve.

Notes current arrangements of UK Government funding for formerly employed staff is able to cover private rented property rates and agrees the Council leader and officers communicate directly the need for the same level of support for all refugees being welcomed and resettled in the City.

Notes the welcome offer by AirBnB to fund and provide 20,000 homes for Afghan refugees world as part of the humanitarian effort and agrees that the Council Leader and Chief Executive should approach AirBnB in the UK to determine whether any of these homes could be provided in Edinburgh.

Notes the very generous offers of direct support from the people of Edinburgh and agrees that Edinburgh should play its part in welcoming of Afghan refugees: both in terms of the need to find immediate temporary accommodation and welcoming Afghan refugees for permanent resettlement in the Capital.

**Moved by: Councillor Jason Rust**

**Seconded by: Councillor Iain Whyte**