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Ann Smith (MCIPS)
Deputy Director
Resettlement, Asylum Support & Integration
Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF

11th July, 2023

Dear Ann,

As you will be aware, whilst we will always be the first to be a welcoming and compassionate community, Luton is fundamentally against any increases in the already hugely disproportionate numbers of local refugee asylum seekers accommodated by the Home Office in our town.

This is the view of all partners affected, including and above all our voluntary, community and faith sector, because of the welfare impacts and risks this disproportionate burden places both on the refugee asylum seekers themselves and on the wider community and services that support them.

Contextually, as per our various previous communications on this matter, Luton has been disproportionately affected by this policy approach which fundamentally fails to adequately consider community impact and welfare in placing refugee asylum seekers across the county, region and country.

As you also know, we have been trying every means at our disposal to get the Home Office to understand this position and hugely damaging impact for some considerable time. In November, from an already disproportionate position, the Home Office stepped up additional accommodation sites which effectively more than doubled the refugee asylum seeker population in the town.

According to DLUHC/HO data (May 23), Luton has the fifth highest number of people in contingency accommodation nationally. Indeed, for the accommodation categories with considerably greater impact and risk (Initial Accommodation, Dispersal Accommodation, Contingency Accommodation), Luton now hosts nearly one fifth of the total East of England population (19.1%), despite Luton's population representing just 3.6% of the East of England. Current Home Office commitments to address disproportionality of impact discount Contingency Accommodation which compounds the issue further.

From your recent communication, we now understand that the Home Office intends to further increase the numbers in existing accommodation and therefore the burden on Luton.

Though our previous communications with Home Office officials, reiterated consistently on a number of occasions, we have requested three points to be acknowledged and agreed:

1. No new increases in numbers of refugee asylum seekers accommodated in the town.
2. A clear plan to reduce numbers in Luton. This plan must go beyond the Regional Plans and include contingency accommodation.
3. Fair and sustainable funding for all agencies impacted.

This disproportionate position is causing the already overloaded Luton system significant and unacceptable challenges and ongoing concerns including as per outlined below:

- Increased serious safeguarding incidents and risks at accommodation sites
- Community safety concerns in terms of criminal incidents including serious violence
- Health and safety issues at accommodation sites
- Burdens of numbers of UASC requiring assessment and support
- Wider community tension and cohesion issues with threatened exploitation by extreme right-wing groups

The impact on local law enforcement has been a significant additional demand on resources. Incidents in and related to the hotels and their residents in the past six months have seen serious sexual and violent offences. This coupled with the extremist attention that has been focussed on the town in recent years and the anxiety this causes large numbers of our communities, provides for ever increasing challenges.

In addition, we have just analysed our most recent resident survey where there has been a sharp fall in residents' satisfaction with Luton as a place to live, where some of the specific issues raised above have been cited as reasons which are impacting their quality of life. And this is from one of the most compassionate and welcoming towns in the country.

Within the next two weeks, Luton system partners will be sending a further document to you that further articulates the impact being felt by refugee asylum seekers and local people and organisations.

In the meantime, our collective Luton position is opposed to any further increases that exacerbate our already complex and challenging situation.

Yours sincerely,



Robin Porter
Chief Executive of Luton Council



Chief Constable, Trevor Rodenhurst
Bedfordshire Police



Felicity Cox
Chief Executive, BLMK IC



Alan Caton
LSAB Independent Chair & LSCP
Independent Scrutineer