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Paul Bilbao
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Resettlement, Asylum Support & Integration

Asylum and Protection
The Capital Building, Old Hall Street, Liverpool

11th September, 2023

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your email dated 31st August 2023 at 17:12.

Having reviewed the contents I note that as matters stand you are not prepared to give any assurances regarding numbers or types of accommodation being utilised in Luton, other than a vague statement that you have no plans or intentions to source additional hotels. This is clearly very disappointing from the perspective of the LA and takes us no further forward.

We also note that with regards to the classification of accommodation, which then relates to the funding available, you have not addressed key points.


You state that the Home Office is clear that both Lea Halls and IBIS are contingency accommodation and therefore not eligible for the £3,500.00 payment, and that the terms and conditions are set by Treasury. However this in no way addresses the point we have made that it has clearly been referred to as IA in numerous pieces of correspondence and you have disclosed nothing to support that this is Contingency accommodation, such as (but not limited to) internal memos, minutes of meetings or instructions to Clear springs Ready Homes.

We have also previously asked for clarity from the Home Office around the numbers of residents at Lea Halls who were on Section 95 status at the time the accommodation was stood up by Clearsprings Ready Homes on 1st November 2022.

Furthermore your response does not address the clear key issues of whether the classification is correct, why you state that accommodation is classed as Contingency (against the correspondence determining it as IA previously referred to) and when Contingency accommodation ceases to be Contingency accommodation. Simply stating it is Contingency accommodation does not address the basis of that categorisation which we are disputing. Either the Home Office or the Treasury needs to address this clearly and in writing, with supporting evidence so that we can assess our position properly. Clearly such evidence would be needed in the event a legal challenge were to be mounted in the absence of any agreement being reached at mediation.

At this point it appears to us from our communication that the Home Office and CSRH are trying to persuade Luton to accept a proposition that Lea Halls become dispersed accommodation, despite the serious issues and concerns raised about this, simply to get funding which we believe we are already owed. If we believed that Lea Halls was suitable to be permanent dispersed accommodation) then this matter would already be resolved.

Luton



The LA remains clear that this dispute relates to the correct designation and funding compensation for Lea Halls due to Luton by the Home Office's own definitions and published funding commitments to all LA's.

This is an entirely separate matter from any consideration regarding the future use of Lea Halls. It is unhelpful and from our perspective somewhat disingenuous to seek to conflate and confuse these two issues, especially in the context of the fundamental objection we maintain to the disproportionate numbers of refugee asylum seekers being accommodated here by the Home Office.

We are, as always, open to further discussions and would welcome an open and productive working relationships with the Home Office on these issues going forward but given that we do not accept the decision we will be looking at moving towards mediation shortly and a Notice of Mediation will follow in due course. Mediation is clearly likely to be more productive if you could respond within the next 7 days on the specific issues raised above along with providing supporting evidence, so that both parties are clear on their positions. Should you fail to address this again (the points having been raised in previous communications and so should have been addressed at the latest in your last email) then we will have no alternative than to look to commence mediation anyway as we cannot allow the matter to drag on.

We await hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Robin Porter
Chief Executive of Luton Council