

Report Title:	Rossendale Refugee Support Service Tender		
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	15 th July 2026
Report of:	Director of Place	Cabinet Portfolio:	Communities, Housing, Health and Wellbeing
Cabinet Lead Member:	Councillor M Smith	Wards Affected:	All
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency
Integrated Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes	Attached: No
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Valley Plan Priorities	Thriving Local Economy: This involves securing new inward investment, creating a sustainable economy, matching local skills with future job opportunities, and supporting town centres as unique destinations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	High Quality Environment: This includes having a "clean and green" local environment, reducing the borough's carbon footprint, improving waste and recycling rates, and delivering new homes with a good mix of housing tenures.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Healthy & Proud Communities: This priority focuses on improving the health and physical/mental wellbeing of residents, reducing health inequalities, ensuring access to better leisure facilities and health services, and fostering a sense of pride in the community.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Effective & Efficient Council: The aim is to provide good quality and responsive services, embrace new technology, be a financially sustainable council with a commercial outlook, and ensure sound governance.	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Rossendale Borough Council does not presently provide a support service to refugees and asylum seekers in the borough. Lancashire County Council originally funded a service in the borough through a tender process, however, they ceased to fund any local services in August 2025. Services are currently delivered by a local voluntary group, the Rossendale Refugee Support Group, who receive ad hoc grant funding. They are struggling to meet the demand for information and support.
- 1.2 The Council has received Asylum Dispersal Funding - a flexible fund to support resettlers who present with a wide range of needs including housing issues, wellbeing services, intervention and integration services and signposting/orientation services. The joint Corporate Management Team/Cabinet strategic budget setting meeting agreed to fund an Asylum Seeker Support Service as part of the 2026/2027 strategic budget asks.
- 1.3 Prior to the tender being advertised, a Scheme of Delegation was approved for the delivery of these services for a maximum of two years, to be reviewed after year one in the event that alternative funding had been sourced from elsewhere. This identified funding of £95k over the two-year period.
- 1.4 The tender process for the service has been completed and there was only one compliant.

1.5 Tender however the tendered contract price exceeds the £95k previously authorised. As the proposed tender value exceeds £100k, Corporate Management Team and Cabinet are required to authorise the spend prior to acceptance of the tender.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Cabinet agrees to proceed with the procurement of the Rossendale Refugee Support Service and accept the tender from the Rossendale Refugee Support Group, with the commencement of the service in August 2026 for up to two years at a total contract price of £119,000.

2.2 That the Director of Place, in consultation with the Lead Member, be authorised to extend the contract after year one subject to satisfactory performance and available funding.

2.3 That the Head of Legal and Governance be authorised to enter into all necessary legal agreements for the delivery of the service.

3. BACKGROUND AND REASON FOR THE DECISION

3.1 Rossendale currently has 243 asylum seekers in the borough in SERCO managed properties, which includes 25 families. There are also individuals and families that have arrived as refugees through the UK Resettlement Scheme.

3.2 Rossendale based support to resettlers to settle into the area including access the necessary help and support needed, and support to integrate with local communities has been provided in past years by LCC. However, LCC ceased to commission local services in August 2025.

3.3 The Rossendale Refugee Support Group, a local charity, has been providing support weekly at Haslingden Community Link using small grants from the Council, Awards for All (lottery), Lancashire County Council and other sources.

3.4 The service currently offered by the Rossendale Refugee Support Group consists of a 2-hour drop-in session supported by volunteers once a week in Haslingden, with a part time worker providing additional casework. There is no service in the east of the borough, where approximately half of resettlers live, and they have to travel to Haslingden. The service is very much valued by resettlers, but is unable to meet demand.

3.5 The provision of a service across the borough will help improve community cohesion, building strong, positive relationships among people from diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of belonging, mutual respect, and shared responsibility within a community.

3.6 There are currently no alternative funding streams available for the provision of these services which are crucial to the needs of our communities. The Council's Asylum Dispersal Funding is able to support the delivery of this function and was identified at budget setting as appropriate for the delivery of this service. The tender was drafted so that the commitment of the two-year funding streams was dependent on other funding not coming forward for the same/similar services. In the event that alternative funding is identified, the contract will come to an end after year one and the Asylum Dispersal Fund will be diverted to other eligible services.

3.7 It was originally anticipated that the services could be delivered for £95k and the appropriate Scheme of Delegation was approved. The specification was outlined in the tender but the tender prices received have exceeded the original budget.

- 3.8 Officers have considered value engineering the services but this would be to the detriment of those in need and place extra resource implications on officers. The Asylum Dispersal Funding envelope allows for the increase in budget on this project so it is proposed to increase the budget to £119k.
- 3.9 The tender was advertised in full compliance of the Council's Constitution and the Procurement Act 2023. Only two tenders were received in response but one of these was not a compliant and far exceeded the proposed budget in any event. The remaining tender from Rossendale Refugee Support Group has been fully appraised and evaluated and is a compliant tender that officers can proceed with.
- 3.10 The service offered by the Rossendale Refugee Support Group in the successful tender includes a longer weekly drop-in session in Haslingden, a similar session in Bacup, extra paid staff to support case work and the ability to provide more intervention and integration support. It is therefore proposed to award the contract to this group subject to approval of Cabinet.

4. RISK

- 4.1 Without the provision of a locally based support service, the Council would have more pressure on existing services and staff to provide information and help to resettlers on a wide range of issues including help to access a GP, school and gaining employment.
- 4.2 The provision of a service across the borough will help improve community cohesion, building strong, positive relationships among people from diverse backgrounds, fostering a sense of belonging, mutual respect, and shared responsibility within a community.

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS (FINANCE)

- 5.1 There are no out of budget pressures as a result of this appointment. There was only one compliant tender received and this is within budget for the Asylum Dispersal Funding, therefore there are no financial concerns.

6. MONITORING OFFICER COMMENTS (LEGAL)

- 6.1 Cabinet is required to approve all expenditure over £100k in line with the Constitution. It was officers' reasonable belief that the services would be delivered under this value and a compliant tender exercise has been completed.
- 6.2 If Cabinet is minded to approve this expenditure, legal agreements will be completed with the successful bidder building in the appropriate review mechanisms after completion of year one as outlined in the body of the report.
- 6.3 All required notices will be issued.

7. INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 IAA completed. No implications.

8. POLICY/STRATEGY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Providing a support service for resettlers in the borough allows RBC to deliver the Council's equality objectives under the Equality Act 2010, and our Public Sector Equality Duty, specifically:

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

8.2 Consultation has been undertaken with Corporate Management Team and Lead Member.

9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no ongoing LGR implications. In the event that the contract extends into year 2 it will novate into the new authority for a limited time without financial implication.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 The Invitation to Tender may be viewed with the Communities Team, Futures Park.