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Cllr Richard Porch and Ms Lisa Courtney
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May 2022

Dear Cllr Richard Porch and Ms Lisa Courtney,

Thank you for your letter of 20 April 2022 to Home Secretary on behalf of Saffron Walden Council. About the Governments response to the Humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Your letter has been passed to the Direct Communications Unit for a response on behalf of the Home Secretary.

Nationality and Borders Bill

This crisis, like the Afghanistan crisis that came before it, underlines the importance of reform of our immigration system, so that we have the capacity to welcome refugees swiftly and in large numbers, and can focus our efforts on people in genuine need.

The Nationality and Borders Bill was recently passed by Parliament. We are not preventing migrants from seeking asylum. However, we believe that those seeking asylum should do so in the first safe country and we want to encourage those seeking protection to use legal and safe routes.

We maintain that people in need of protection should avoid making dangerous journeys and claim asylum in the first safe country they reach – that is the fastest route to safety. The first safe country principle is widely recognised internationally and is a fundamental feature of the Common European Asylum System.

The new offence for people arriving in the UK without a required entry clearance applies to everyone who requires entry clearance for entry on arrival to the UK. This means it would also apply to refugees who require entry clearance for entry on arrival. However, it is our position that we are not ultimately seeking to prosecute those who are recognised as refugees who come to the UK to seek asylum.

Visas

Biometric checks are an essential part of our visa application process. Visa applications

give the UK the chance to assess the applicant's circumstances, such as where they come from, why they want to come to the UK, how long they want to stay for, and their personal situation and skills.

For the individual, a visa can help provide them with a better understanding on what they can do in the UK in terms of employment and how long they can stay for. Having been moved from another country following such horrific events, being documented and having a formal document in a safe country can provide clarity and stability to an individual.

Funding

The government is providing to councils at a rate of £10,500 per person to enable them to provide support to individuals and families to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into communities.

Ukraine access to services

Ukrainian nationals coming to the UK under the Ukraine Schemes are given access to work, benefits and public services as laid down in the Appendix Ukraine to the Immigration Rules, details of which can be found at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-ukraine-scheme

Safeguarding checks

Under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, local authorities will run DBS checks on sponsors, with enhanced DBS with barred list checks for those housing families with children or vulnerable adults.

We will do everything we can to support Ukrainians, continuing this country's proud history of being a place of sanctuary and of standing for freedom and democracy and against barbarism and tyranny.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Sonnekus

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