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| Eich cyf / Your ref:                        | Gofynner am / Please ask for:       | Wendy Walters                         |
| Fy nghyf / My ref:                          | Llinell Uniongyrchol / Direct Line: | 01267 224112                          |
| Dyddiad / Date: 24 <sup>th</sup> April 2023 | E-bost / E-mail:                    | chiefexecutive@carmarthenshire.gov.uk |

Ann Smith  
Deputy Director for Adult and Family Accommodation  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Dear Ann,

### Asylum Seeker Contingency Accommodation

Further to the letter sent by the Chief Executive of Carmarthenshire County Council dated 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023 in relation to proposals for the Stradey Park Hotel, Llanelli we would like, as a collective, add some additional comments in order to reiterate concerns locally.

We are extremely concerned about the use of this type of contingency accommodation and the impact these proposals will have on the local community, service delivery and the asylum seekers themselves. We would re-iterate that key lessons from the use of asylum accommodation established at Penally Camp in Pembrokeshire (our near neighbours) have still not been taken into consideration.

We met with your officials and Clearsprings on 18<sup>th</sup> April and there was a total lack of clarity around the proposals and there has, to date, been no accurate assessment of the risks and suitability associated with the site itself. This is exceptionally worrying. We fully acknowledge the current pressures in terms of housing issues across the UK but no account has been taken of the local pressures. We currently have over 800 households where we have a homelessness duty and over 4,000 on the housing register. We have already housed a significant number of Syrian, Afghan, Ukrainian and asylum seeker households but this has been achieved through a co-ordinated and planned approach. It is for this reason why the placements have been successful. Your proposed approach in terms of the Stradey Park goes totally against this approach and it is not the way to achieve a sustainable outcome for the asylum seekers.

We have met with your officials and Clearspings again on 24<sup>th</sup> April and are still not clear on the key issues we have raised in our letter of 19<sup>th</sup> April. Extremely concerning was a comment made by one

#### Wendy Walters

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Chief Executive, County Hall,  
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of the Directors at Clearsprings that the Stradey Park could accommodate between 250-300 single people. This is totally at odds with what had previously been confirmed (132 bedspaces) and does not give confidence in terms of the communication channels between yourselves and Clearsprings. Again, this needs to be confirmed, in writing, as a matter of urgency.

The proposed use for such a large number at one location will place a huge strain on key agencies e.g. Local Authority, Police and Health. There will no doubt be significant community concerns and no doubt separate right wing protests, largely involving people from outside of the County. There will also be the perception, particularly with the current housing shortage, the feeling that asylum seekers have been prioritised over local members of the community.

There is also the lack of local infrastructure to deal with potential complex and physical mental health needs and the language skills to communicate effectively. We also understand that there is currently no agreement in place between Welsh Government and yourselves in terms of health funding, despite a commissioning contract being in place in England. Please could you clarify what the funding plans are. Additionally, the legal needs of asylum seekers and distance to specialist firms will be an issue. As a County, we do have limited experience and history of familiarity and understanding in dealing with asylum seekers and the various challenges this will pose. Access to religious and cultural assets will also be problematical and will only exacerbate the sense of isolation.

Furthermore, we are concerned about the lack of community engagement to date. Without proper engagement with the community there will be a lack of trust and confidence and the impact this will have on local perceptions, particularly around fear of crime. Collectively, we are not assured that Clearsprings, from the information provided to date, have sufficient capacity and capability locally to manage the welfare of the asylum seekers themselves.

In conclusion, and as highlighted above, reliance on this type of contingency accommodation remains a direct contradiction to the mechanism agreed between the Wales Asylum Board and the Home Office. We want to focus on facilitating final dispersal solutions as we have previously successfully delivered against. The Stradey Park proposal is not a sustainable option and would urge that you re-consider the proposal and work with us on more appropriate solutions."

Yours Sincerely



Wendy Walters, Chief Executive  
Carmarthenshire County Council

Ifan Charles, Superintendent  
Dyfed Powys Police

Steve Moore, Chief Executive  
Hywel Dda University Health  
Board

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