

The future of the hotel used for migrants in Wokingham

I held a meeting with officials over the Home Office use of hotels in the local area to house migrants pending resolution of their cases. I stressed the undesirability of long delays both to the migrants and to the local community. If someone is a genuine asylum seeker we need to welcome them and let them get on with establishing a new life in the UK, and if they are illegal economic migrants they should not be put up for extended periods in hotels at taxpayers' expense. We need our hotels available for their normal users, to allow business people and visitors travelling to Wokingham a good choice of hotel, and to cater for weddings, conferences and events.

I asked when the Home Office plans to vacate the hotels . They did not know.

I asked what plans they had to ensure a smooth return of hotels to normal use. They said that was a matter for the hotels.

I asked for an assurance they would not be taking any more of our local hotels. They did not think so, but could not guarantee that.

I asked why they did not recruit more staff and get rid of the backlog of cases. They said they were doing so.

I asked why it took so long to decide a case for someone who had travelled from a safe country like Albania. They said they were now speeding these cases up.

I asked how they handled people who had come from a safe country like France. They said these cases could be complex and could not be done promptly.

I asked if I could assume they had not identified anywhere in our area for the idea that they transfer people still having to wait a long time from hotels to other accommodation. They thought that was true but could not confirm.

I asked for written follow up to the issues where they could not be sure of the answers, which I will share when I get it.