

## County Council – 8 October 2024

### Item 6 – Notice Of Motion by Councillor Cross

#### **Motion for East Sussex County Council to be an Active Participant in the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network.**

The motion references the far-right, anti-immigration protests and riots which occurred in England and Northern Ireland from 30 July to 5 August 2024.

The City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network is part of the broader City of Sanctuary UK Network which seeks to support community groups and organisations of different sizes and type to become supporters and members by aligning themselves with a set of values and principles which centre around providing a welcoming place of safety to people seeking sanctuary in the UK.

The current list of Network members are primarily housing authorities (including country unitary authorities, e.g. Herefordshire, Dorset, Northumberland, Shropshire) with Cambridgeshire and Oxfordshire having recently joined. Locally Brighton and Hove City Council and Hastings belong to the Network.

Becoming a member of City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network involves an application process which is followed by an award appraisal process to gain recognition. Further information is available at the City of Sanctuary website.

The City of Sanctuary Network describes itself as a movement and identifies a number of actions any group or organisation can take in working towards membership. The motion includes the principles of the Network and the Theory of Change, but the charter and pledge also include additional related commitments or activities which are referenced in the themes below.

#### **Our local position and activities**

East Sussex County Council condemns the far-right, anti-immigration protests and riots which occurred in England and Northern Ireland from 30 July to 5 August 2024, including the threats and targeting of communities in parts of East Sussex.

ESCC has proactively developed activities in recent years which align with the principles and values of the City of Sanctuary Network. The approach includes strategic objective, partnership working and action.

- 1. A welcoming approach:** In East Sussex we provide a culture of welcome through our own activities and in our collaboration with statutory and non-statutory partners. This is set out on our dedicated webpages [Support for refugees in East Sussex | East Sussex County Council](#), which reflects our broader Council values, our commitments to [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#), and our specific duties and approach to welcoming and supporting people seeking sanctuary in East Sussex.
- 2. Partnership working:** East Sussex County Council convenes an East Sussex Migration Partnership (ESMP) with representatives from all sectors supporting refugees, asylum seekers and other migrant groups in East Sussex. We also convene a county-wide operational forum and either arrange or participate in partnerships forums for specific

cohorts/communities at a locality, county-wide or regional level.

### **3. Priorities and practical action:**

- Through our ESMP and other forums for migration, refugees, asylum or resettlement, we actively identify the priorities we can collectively work on as a partnership. Where we at ESCC have specific responsibilities (e.g. Homes for Ukraine) we have collaborated with partners to identify key needs and mobilise funds and resources to meet those needs in an effective way which respects and values the views and priorities of people seeking sanctuary.
- Through our co-ordination and support of the East Sussex Prevent Group, we work in partnership to identify and mitigate any risks of a terrorist attack, which includes monitoring Hate Crime incidents and Community Sentiments. The County Council's Safer Community Team is developing a Community Engagement Strategy to encourage communities to report concerns.
- The County Council shares intelligence and best practice updates at the national Local Government Anti-Asylum Activity SIGCE (Special Interest Group on Countering Extremism) and via the LGA Knowledge Hub.
- Local authority, police and multi-agency meetings are co-ordinated to ensure preparation and response to any planned protest activity.

### **4. Involving people in decision making:**

- The Migrant Support Team has consulted with migrant groups in developing our information resources for migrants and has supported a specific programme to welcome beneficiaries of the Hong Kong British National Overseas (BNO) visa. Within our Homes for Ukraine programme, we have built in a Ukrainian Guest Advisory Panel (UGAP) of Homes for Ukraine visa holders who feed directly into discussions about service provision and planning of priorities.
- ESCC actively engages with partners, the voluntary sector and grassroot organisations that directly work and support individuals seeking sanctuary. These organisations ensure the voice the supported groups inform strategic work ensuring concerns and issues raised are fed into policy discussions and influence decision making processes at a strategic level. Engagement with the grass root groups means that issues and concerns are raised promptly, and where necessary escalated to higher authorities including national Government departments.

### **5. Understanding and education:**

- ESCC has commissioned a programme of training: "Cultural Curiosity: Working better with refugees and asylum seekers", as part of training and awareness for relevant staff. This programme is delivered in partnership with the local voluntary sector and is open to all our partners. Seventeen sessions have been delivered to

183 delegates between November 2023 and September 2024

- ESCC supports annual Refugee Week and other events that support diversity and inclusion.

### **Membership of the City of Sanctuary Network**

In addition to encouraging these types of local activities, the City of Sanctuary Network, their Charter and their principles also require members to take a clear position in relation to issues that are within the remit of national Government policy. This includes areas such as:

- A fair and effective process to decide whether people need protection should be in place. *(Principle)*
- No one should be locked up indefinitely. *(Principle)*
- No one should be left sick or destitute in our society. *(Principle)*
- People can seek safety in the UK, no matter how they came here. *(Charter statement)*
- People can live in dignity while they wait to hear if they can stay. *(Charter statement)*
- People seeking sanctuary and their local communities can build better futures together. Local councils that host refugees should be adequately supported. *(Charter statement)*

ESCC's approach reflects the spirit of the principles and statements and we advocate for these positions to national Government through the relevant forums and through consultation and engagement responses. However, ESCC has limited control over whether these principles and statements can be fully achieved in practice.

### **The Migrant Champions Network**

The [Migrant Champions Network](#) is “a network of local councillors from across the UK - and across different political parties - working together to fight for the rights of all migrants.” As such it is a Network specifically for individual councillors to join and does not require the wider Council to appoint a member.

As the East Sussex Migration Partnership (ESMP) and cross-council Migrant Support Team are supported through the Adult Social Care department, the Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health already has migrant related activities within his portfolio.

**Mark Stainton**

**Director of Adult Social Care and Health**