

14a - Motion 1 Hackney, A Borough of Sanctuary

Following the publication of the motion in the agenda, the proposer and seconder have amended the motion to include additional text as follows:

Bold Text= Amendments

This Council notes:

- That the Coalition and successive Conservative governments' "Hostile Environment" policies deliberately make life hard for refugees, asylum seekers and for those who cannot prove their right to remain in the UK.
- During the Windrush 75th anniversary year, the government is rowing back on key recommendations made by Wendy Williams in the 2020 Lessons Learned Review: to create the post of Migrants' Commissioner; increase the powers of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) to publish reports; and to run a series of reconciliation events with members of the Windrush Generation to discuss the impact of the scandal on their lives.
- The Government's cruel treatment of the Windrush Generation has forced many Hackney residents who were born in the UK, to go through unnecessary amounts of distress, with some being deported.
- The Council will continue to celebrate tolerance and diversity and welcome refugees and migrants. The Council has already welcomed refugees from Afghanistan, Syria, Ukraine and through formal schemes, who have made Hackney their home over the last 5 years.
- The Government's underfunding of the immigration system and the impact of migrant and refugee communities results in delayed decision making on applications, unjustifiably high and unreasonable fees for immigration applications, and the harsh reality of being excluded from fully participating in society for those who are granted leave to remain in the UK, but who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF).
- The Home Office NRPF policy is inhumane and fails to comply with the legal obligation to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It has also been found unlawful by the High Court for the third year in a row.
- **That the United Nations Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent has stated that, "There are barriers to accessing asylum in advance of arrival by people of African descent. Many asylum seekers of African descent often find themselves subject to punitive migration controls such as detention, denial of benefits, deportation sometimes in error, and externalisation. Their state of precariousness is exacerbated by denial of the right to work and basic needs such as health care, housing, and adequate food.**

- That the pandemic has brought further difficulties for refugees and migrants, including insecure work, lack of access to decent housing and digital exclusion.

This Council further notes:

- **That all our residents, no matter their nationality, call Hackney their home and bring significant value to our borough.**
- That Hackney celebrates our borough's history of being a welcoming borough, and welcoming everybody, regardless of their background. The Council recognises the contribution of refugees, migrants and those seeking sanctuary to the Borough of Hackney. We are committed to welcoming and including them in all of our activities and actively seek ways in which we can support them.
- That, throughout the pandemic, Hackney Council's support services were open to anyone who needed them, no matter their immigration status.
- Despite limitations imposed by central government, Hackney Council continues to try to find ways to support people with NRPF. For example, the Council has extended eligibility for free school meals to include some children of groups who have no recourse to public funds.
- **The Council has called on the Home Secretary expressing serious concerns about the Streamline Asylum Process and the absence of resources to provide necessary support including translation services and legal aid provision.**
- **Mayor Glanville is a signatory to the Migrant Democracy Statement 'Our Homes Our Votes', that would see the implementation of the Scotland and Wales model to allow all residents who have permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who do not need permission, to have the right to vote in local elections, including mayoral elections, in England and Northern Ireland. The Council celebrates Refugee Week annually and publicly shares and celebrates the contribution of refugees and migrants in Hackney.**
- That the Council is committed to our refugee and migrant communities. We support the initiative to make Hackney a recognised 'Borough of Sanctuary,' welcoming those fleeing violence and persecution and offering them safety.

This Council resolves to:

- Join a network of cities and towns which promote the inclusion and welfare of people who are fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries and become a recognised "Borough of Sanctuary".
- Continue to celebrate the contribution of refugee and migrant communities to Hackney.

- Continue to work with organisations in Hackney who support refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the borough to create an inclusive and welcoming borough for those seeking sanctuary here.
- Challenge anti-refugee and anti-migrant attitudes wherever they are found.
- Continue to lobby the government to reform the No Recourse to Public Funds condition so that people are no longer blocked from fully participating in society for years while they wait for their status to be resolved.
- We will continue to put pressure on the Government to reverse the Home Secretary's plans to abandon key Commitments on the Windrush Compensation Scheme, following the publication of the lessons learned review, and for the Scheme to be run independently from the Home Office.
- Write to the Minister of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities requesting that the franchise for local elections be extended in England and Northern Ireland to all qualifying foreign nationals in line with eligibility criteria in Scotland and Wales. This would ensure a UK-wide and fair approach so that all our residents who are also our council tax payers are enfranchised.
- Work with local businesses and community partners to further tackle the digital divide, provide affordable access to online services and look at ways to donate IT devices locally to those in need, rather than scrapping them.

Proposer: Cllr Sophie Conway

Seconder: Cllr Joe Walker