

NOTICES OF MOTION

Meeting of Council, Thursday, 20 March 2014 5:00 pm (Item 8.)

Proposed by Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Sood:

Leicester City Council recognises the plight of asylum seekers forced to flee their home countries due to conflict and persecution. Many arrive in the UK after having been threatened, detained, beaten or tortured. An adult seeking protection in this country who has no other source of support will receive just over £5 a day to pay for food, clothing, toiletries and travel (accommodation and utilities are paid for separately for those who have nowhere to live). They are not allowed to work to support themselves. If their claims are refused by the Home Office, they lose all support and are left destitute and street homeless.

In the last six months of 2013 the British Red Cross Leicester Refugee Support Services have carried out 1,659 actions (e.g. the issuing of food parcels, sleeping bags) to support 325 destitute asylum seekers in Leicester. Of these 108 were new cases and it is likely that this reflects the impact of welfare reforms in general and has resulted in a reduction in community capacity to continue to support such persons. Leicester City Council is concerned about such destitution and its impact on local communities.

Leicester is a welcoming and inclusive city and wants to join those local authorities (Liverpool, Bristol, Sheffield, Oxford, Glasgow, Leeds and Bradford) petitioning the Home Secretary to relieve the suffering of people seeking sanctuary and especially those people who have yet to be granted leave to remain in the UK.

Leicester City Council approves the following actions:

1. Write on behalf of Leicester City Council to the Minister of State for Immigration questioning Government policies that force asylum seekers into destitution; expressing concern over the low level of support available to asylum seekers; seeking a change of policy to allow local authorities to assist refused asylum seekers who are in danger of falling into destitution; asking that such asylum seekers should be able to work to support themselves if they have been waiting for more than 6 months for their cases to be resolved; and demanding that local authorities should be permitted to provide emergency provision to refused asylum seekers as to other homeless people.

2. Ask Leicester's MPs to support the spirit of this motion, to raise the matter in the House of Commons, and to support a change in current laws regarding asylum applications by removing restrictions on local authorities in the support they can provide to destitute asylum seekers.

3. Leicester City Council officers to produce a report summarising existing support for asylum seekers available in Leicester including housing, training, education, and legal advice open to vulnerable asylum applicants.

4. Leicester City Council to join the national campaign "Still Human, Still Here" (a coalition of 60 organisations, including several city councils, the Church of England and Catholic Archbishop Conferences, Crisis, Oxfam, and the Red Cross, who are proposing practical solutions to ending the destitution of refused asylum seekers in the UK.)

5. Leicester City Council to seek further support for this motion and action via the Local Government Association and by encouraging other Councils in the UK to join us on this issue."