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| Subject: | Brighton & Hove's Re-accreditation as a City of Sanctuary | | |
| Date of Meeting: | 11th March 2021 | | |
| Report of: | Executive Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Communities | | |
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| Ward(s) affected: | All | | |

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The report informs the committee about the city council's current status with regard to the national City of Sanctuary movement and outlines the steps that need to be taken to become 're-accredited' as a city of sanctuary.
- 1.2 The city council's Corporate Plan 2020-2023 includes the following commitment: "*We will continue to play our part in the international refugee crisis and promote our status as a proud City of Sanctuary*". Also, a recommendation in the International Migrants Needs Assessment, accepted by the Neighbourhoods, Inclusion, Communities and Equality (NICE) committee in January 2018 is for the council to '*maintain and develop local commitment to City of Sanctuary status.*'

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Tourism, Equalities, Communities & Culture Committee:

- 2.1 instructs officers to progress an application to City of Sanctuary UK for the council's reaccreditation as a City of Sanctuary as per outlined in appendix 2.
- 2.2 recommends to Full Council that it endorses the City of Sanctuary Charter (appendix 1).
- 2.3 instructs officers to work with the local city of sanctuary Group – Sanctuary on Sea – to support the group and the council's commitment to Brighton & Hove being a place of sanctuary.
- 2.4 approve the council joining the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network and being a member of the Network's steering group (paragraph 3.5)
- 2.5 note the City of Sanctuary application process will be carried out as part of the council's development of its Inclusive Cities Action Plan agreed at TECC committee September 2019.

That Full Council:

2.6 endorses the City of Sanctuary Charter (appendix 1).

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Since 2007, City of Sanctuary UK, (a national umbrella organisation), has supported the development of a network of ‘groups’ in villages, towns and cities across the UK to encourage places to become ‘cities of sanctuary’. Brighton & Hove’s City of Sanctuary group – called [Sanctuary on Sea](#) – has existed since 2013. Brighton & Hove was designated as a City of Sanctuary in June 2015.

3.2 While City of Sanctuary UK started with a narrow focus on people seeking sanctuary, welcoming people fleeing persecution and violence, it has widened to a welcome ‘for all’, albeit with an emphasis on offering sanctuary.

3.3 At the City of Sanctuary UK AGM in June 2020 the membership voted to discontinue the ad-hoc recognition process for local authorities and to establish a UK wide City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network, as a way of designating and assessing ‘City of Sanctuary’ status. Any local authority can apply to become a member of the network. There are two types of membership: ‘Awarded’ member and ‘Non-awarded’ member. As Brighton & Hove City Council had already been awarded City-wide recognition, the city will be classed as an ‘awarded member’ but will be expected to submit an application form for re-accreditation within six months of its membership application.

3.4 In applying for membership of the Local Authority Network, the city council is pledging:

- To support the ‘City of Sanctuary’ vision that *the UK will be a welcoming place of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution.*
- To endorse the City of Sanctuary Charter (appendix 1) and agree to act in accordance with City of Sanctuary values, applying the network principles within its work (as far as the Brighton & Hove context enables this).
- To recognise the contribution of people seeking sanctuary, welcoming, including and supporting them within the Brighton & Hove context. The council is also expected to support Sanctuary on Sea in their work.
- To add the city council’s name to a list of supporters of City of Sanctuary and a list of members of the Local Authority Network on the national website.
- To agree to work towards a City of Sanctuary Local Authority Award with the aim of becoming a recognised Council of Sanctuary.

3.5 Given the longstanding nature of its commitment to supporting sanctuary seekers, Brighton & Hove City Council has also been invited to join the Steering Group of the Local Authority Network, alongside the Brighton & Hove Sanctuary on Sea group. This smaller group oversees the above membership process for

the local authority network and makes decisions about the city of sanctuary movement – as it applies to local government – at a national level.

- 3.6 The procedure to be followed by a local authority in applying for a City of Sanctuary Award is included as Appendix 2 to this report. Publicly agreeing to be a member of the Local Authority Network and endorsing the City of Sanctuary charter is the first requirement of the application process.
- 3.7 Thereafter local authorities are expected to produce an action plan describing how the criteria will be met. These criteria (outlined in Appendix 2) follow the principles of ‘Learn, Embed and Share’. Once the plan is developed, the city council can apply to become a city of sanctuary, with the endorsement of the Sanctuary on Sea group.
- 3.8 The criteria also include participating in collective representations to national government on relevant policy issues and the production of a written strategy (either an independent strategy or as part of a broader strategy) which is publicly available and sets out commitment for at least three years. The intention is for this to be part of the council’s Inclusive Cities Action Plan. The Inclusive Cities programme is focused on areas’ making a step change in their welcome and settling of ‘newcomers’. TECC committee approved the council’s participation in the programme in September 2019. The work on this was paused due to the Covid pandemic and has recently restarted with the first meeting of the local task force on 8th February 2021, chaired by the TECC co-chair Cllr Powell.
- 3.9 Given the work on the two action plans (for City of Sanctuary and Inclusive Cities) is running concurrently and is intrinsically linked, to maximise resources and avoid duplication the City of Sanctuary action plan will become a part of the Inclusive Cities action plan. Newcomers arriving seeking sanctuary from violence and persecution are a particularly vulnerable sub-set of the wider population of newcomers to the UK. Therefore, the actions required to advance the city’s welcoming approach to seekers of sanctuary will enhance the wider work on inclusivity for all newcomers. The chair of Sanctuary on Sea has therefore been invited to join the Inclusive Cities Task Force to facilitate this joint working.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

In light of the corporate plan commitment “*We will continue to play our part in the international refugee crisis and promote our status as a proud City of Sanctuary*”. and the council’s involvement in the Inclusive Cities programme no other alternative options have been considered.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The local City of Sanctuary group (Sanctuary on Sea) has been consulted about the council pursuing re-accreditation and joining the Network. The group has agreed to work with and support the council’s application for re-accreditation.
- 5.2 The creation of the wider Inclusive Cities action plan (within which the City of Sanctuary actions will be embedded) will include a programme of community engagement with newcomers and longstanding residents, to include sanctuary seekers.

6. CONCLUSION

Given the city council's commitment to being a city of sanctuary within the 2020-23 corporate plan, these recommendations represent the best way of achieving this ambition.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations made in report. The application process will be taken forward from within existing staffing resources.

Finance Officer Consulted: Michael Bentley Date: 12/02/21

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The Council's Constitution requires decisions to endorse, approve or otherwise commit the Council to any charter, alliance or pledge are taken by Full Council.

Lawyer Consulted: Alice Rowland Date: 15/2/21

Equalities Implications:

By analysing its own policies, procedures and work as part of the City of Sanctuary reaccreditation process, the city council will be enhancing its work to counteract discrimination against Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents and its anti-racism work.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.3 None

Brexit Implications:

- 7.4 It is not yet clear what implications post Brexit changes to the immigration rules will have on Brighton & Hove's migrant population and the risk of migrants in precarious situations becoming more numerous or more marginalised.

Any Other Significant Implications:

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.5 None

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.6 Assets based approach to diverse city, welcoming refugees and migrants from across the globe.

Public Health Implications:

- 7.7 Multi- agency work to consider the needs of the city’s most vulnerable migrant and refugee residents helps fulfil the council’s duty to promote the public health and wellbeing of our residents. For example it is more likely that those with a sense of belonging to the local area and who have a good understanding of local services will register with a GP and seek timely medical advice, follow public health advice and take up vaccinations when offered to them.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. City of Sanctuary Charter
2. Council of Sanctuary Award – Procedure and Criteria

Background Documents

[Inclusive Cities Project](#) -report to meeting of the Tourism, Equalities, Communities and Culture Committee 26th September 2019

