

Amendment Received for Council – 13 October 2021

Item 8 (b) LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT of the Motion Submitted by the Liberal Democrats Group

Hongkongers in Trafford

As a result of the Chinese government's imposition of new 'national security' laws and the British government's policy shift on British National (Overseas) [BN(O)] visas, many people are choosing to emigrate to the UK from Hong Kong. The Home Office predicts that as many as 300,000 Hongkongers may choose to relocate to Britain with many choosing to settle in Trafford and elsewhere across Greater Manchester. This Council recognises and welcomes the enormous contribution that immigrants of all nationalities and backgrounds have made to British life. **We are proud that Trafford has seen a particularly high number of Hongkongers move in to the borough in recent months, and formally welcome them here and express our delight that they have chosen to make Trafford their home.**

The historical, political and economic factors currently surrounding democratic freedoms in Hong Kong make the decision to emigrate particularly stressful for many Hongkongers. There are several considerations and measures that local authorities can take to extend the warmest possible welcome to everyone who decides to make the journey to the UK.

This Council notes:

- That the Home Office figure of 300,000 migrants from Hong Kong is an estimation for the next 5 years and that – with around 70% of the population of Hong Kong being eligible for BN(O) status – that number may rise considerably.
- The 'Coming for Hope' report published by 'Hongkongers in Britain', which indicates the following:
 - That the mean age of applicants is 37 and that 71% of applicants hold a university degree.
 - That 16% of those surveyed say they cannot afford the cost of living for the first 6 months after arriving in the UK.
 - That, of those surveyed, 73% expect to have difficulty finding accommodation, 57% are concerned about living costs and 48% are anxious about finding employment.
 - That 96% of respondents felt that Hong Kong was no longer a 'safe and free home'.
 - That Home Office estimates suggest a net benefit to government finances of between £2.4 and £2.9 billion over five years as a result of the arrival of highly skilled migrants from Hong Kong.

This Council also notes the advice and guidance that is available through the governments 'Hong Kong UK Welcome Programme'.

This Council welcomes:

- The provision of up to £2,720 per BN(O) household for destitution support.

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- The government's commitment to set up 12 new 'Welcome Hubs' across the UK, to support the settlement of BN(O) holders.

Following a recent meeting between the Leader of the Council, the Acting Chief Executive, and representatives of Trafford Hongkongers, Council further acknowledges:

- That there have unfortunately been a small number of hate crime incidents experienced by Hongkongers in recent months.
- That many Hongkongers are experiencing delays in receiving National Insurance numbers from the DWP, impacting on their ability to find work.
- That Trafford's Skills Coordinator and ESOL Coordinator are fully engaged with Trafford's growing Hong Kong community, and are actively signposting Hongkongers to training, employment opportunities and conversation groups.

This Council resolves to:

- Stand against any and all hate crime in Trafford as a borough that values tolerance and inclusion and is proud of our diversity.
- Monitor the intake of Hong Kong children and other children for whom English is a second language into Trafford's schools and allocate additional resources for 'English as a Second Language' and Personal, Social, Health and Economic education to aid with integration in accordance with need.
- ~~Assist parents of children with special educational needs by providing information on the 'SEN Local Offer' and Educational Health Care Plans in Cantonese through the council website.~~ Work with the Trafford Hongkongers Group to ensure that relevant information can be cascaded in Cantonese to those residents who require it, noting that this dissemination has already commenced.
- Write to the ~~Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government~~ Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to express Trafford's interest in contributing to and forming part of the UK's new Hong Kong 'Welcome Hubs' subject to the necessary funding to make this a success being made available by government.
- Write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to ask that more is done to swiftly expedite the allocation of National Insurance numbers for Hongkongers, recognising that they do not have recourse to public funds.
- Ensure progress on the resolutions of this motion are regularly reported back to this Council and ~~are incorporated into the Executive Member for Communities and Partnerships brief~~ that relevant Executive Members subsume these actions into their duties as appropriate at the instruction of the Council Leader.