

Council – 20 November 2024

Joint Labour Party Group and Green Party Group Amendment to motion 8d – Transparency, Accountability, and Community Engagement in Asylum Seeker Housing Decisions

This Council notes:

1. The recent decision to house ~~up to an additional~~ 296 ~~people seeking~~ asylum ~~seekers~~ in Altrincham's Cresta Court Hotel without prior consultation with local residents or ~~opposition~~ councillors, whilst also noting the backlog in the processing of asylum claims created by the last Conservative government which means the Home Office is still having to use hotels as part of the temporary accommodation solution.
2. The lack of ~~transparency surrounding this~~ information provided ahead of the decision, including the absence of a ~~clear shared~~ impact assessment on local services and communities.
3. The potential ~~strain for there to be an impact on~~ local resources, including healthcare, ~~education~~, and housing, which are already under pressure.
4. ~~The heightened public concerns due to the lack of consultation and short notice given to residents.~~ Acknowledges there have been questions raised by some local residents about this arrangement, given the lack of prior notice and information and recognises the need for proactive communication to address community concerns constructively and reduce tension around the arrival of people seeking asylum.
5. ~~The proximity of Cresta Court Hotel to several schools in Altrincham, raising safeguarding concerns.~~
6. 5. Trafford Council's ~~repeated statements that they had no knowledge of the use of Cresta Court as accommodation for asylum seekers until days prior to their arrival~~ has a duty to support people seeking asylum, many of whom have had arduous experiences and the authority has previously given a warm welcome to refugees, recognising the contribution that migrants and refugees make to our communities.

This Council believes:

1. That decisions of this ~~magnitude~~ nature should be made ~~with full transparency and in consultation with all~~ in a transparent way, providing appropriate information to stakeholders, including local residents and ~~opposition~~ councillors.
2. That ~~the current administration has failed to provide adequate information about the long-term plans and potential impacts of this decision~~ national and local

bodies should collaborate as closely as possible, to ensure there is clear communication and preparedness for future plans for asylum accommodation.

3. That there is a need for a comprehensive strategy to manage the integration of people seeking asylum, ~~seekers while safeguarding the interests of~~ ensuring their needs are met, alongside a communication plan to alleviate public concerns and to support local residents.
4. That the rapid manner in which this situation has arisen has ~~increased tensions~~ and the potential for ~~tension discriminatory and prejudicial~~ and negative responses, which may also impact people already settled here.
5. That ~~the~~ there is potential for additional ~~strain~~ calls on Council resources during a time of financial difficulty ~~cannot be overstated~~.

This Council resolves to:

1. Write to the Secretary of State for the Home Office, Yvette Cooper MP, asking her to:
 - a. Ensure that local authorities are given ~~at least a month's~~ adequate notice before future ~~asylum seeker~~ hotel deals of this kind are agreed, ~~and certainly before asylum seekers are placed in the area~~.
 - b. Ensure that ~~in future a full~~ appropriate risk assessments, including, for example the ~~particulars of the~~ surrounding environment of any hotel, ~~is undertaken~~ are considered.
 - c. ~~Ensure that asylum seeker accommodation deals are subject to a public consultation process that seeks out the opinions of potential stakeholders,~~ Provide councils with timely, factual information, including, where possible, the age, gender and languages spoken by people seeking asylum to allow local authorities to work in partnership with organisations such as the NHS, the police, ~~local authorities, local businesses, and~~ local charitable organisations and faith groups, to provide support to those seeking asylum and to prepare and mitigate the potential impact on local services.
 - d. ~~Consider including ordinary members of the public in the consultation process to address any anxiety and concerns.~~
2. ~~Call on the administration to provide a full and detailed report on the decision-making process that led to the housing of asylum seekers in Altrincham, including any risk assessments conducted~~ Work with the Home Office to establish a standardised information-sharing process, so that councils receive information on the rationale, duration, and support provisions for asylum accommodation placements, and the potential time scale for assessing asylum applications.
3. ~~Demand the immediate establishment~~ Explore the possibility of a cross-party working group to ~~oversee the implementation of asylum seeker housing policies and to ensure ongoing transparency and accountability~~ coordinate support resources and facilitate the sharing of information with the local community, in partnership with relevant local organisations.

4. Request ~~that the Council~~ support from central government to conduct ~~and publish a comprehensive~~ an impact assessment on local services, including healthcare, education, and housing ~~and where identified, request additional funding.~~
5. ~~Urge the administration to develop and present a clear strategy for community integration and support,~~ Continue to communicate with the community and to support integration with input from all councillors and local community groups, where possible.
6. ~~Insist on regular updates to the Council and the public on the progress and challenges of housing asylum seekers, including any additional costs incurred by the local authority~~ Request that the Home Office provide councils with regular updates on the costs and duration of accommodation for those seeking asylum, so that councils may communicate accurately with residents.
7. ~~Call for a review of the Council's consultation processes to ensure that significant decisions are made with proper engagement of all affected parties in the future.~~
8. 7. ~~Develop a~~ Comply with the Council's communication strategy which focuses on factual, transparent information to address residents' concerns ~~and provide factual information about the situation,~~ aiming to reduce tensions and ~~prevent discriminatory responses~~ encourage a welcoming, inclusive response for people who are fleeing from danger.