

## **Suspension of Standing Order No 13 (5) agreed.**

8 The Council agreed to suspend the provisions of Standing Order No 13 (5) in respect of motion 8(a) on the agenda only, to allow the time to deal with this motion.

## **Combatting disinformation about asylum seekers, refugees and the housing emergency - Motion as adjusted approved.**

9 Councillor Aitken, seconded by Councillor Doherty, moved that

“Council believes that Glasgow’s diversity is one of its great strengths, and that since its founding 850 years ago, migration has been a singular factor in growing the city, building communities and shaping our identity.

More recently, Council acknowledges that we have welcomed thousands of new Glaswegians as the UK’s most prominent asylum dispersal city and remain the only part of Scotland with a significant refugee population. Well over 90% of all refugees and displaced people who settle in Scotland have made a home in Glasgow. Council understands that the global refugee crisis is only likely to grow and believes that wealthy countries like the UK have a moral and practical responsibility to play in addressing that. Council also believes that Glasgow’s ability to continue to play our very significant role in supporting the delivery of UK Government asylum and refugee policy and Scottish Government resettlement schemes must be adequately supported by those governments.

Council expresses its deep concern about an increase in deliberate disinformation about asylum seekers, refugees and migrants that aims to spread fear and alarm among local residents and disrupt community cohesion, and which have led to incidents in Glasgow and other towns and cities in recent months. Council understands that such disinformation is often orchestrated by far-right groups and individuals and believes that it has the potential to present a real risk to the safety and wellbeing of minority ethnic people in our communities.

Council understands that while much of this disinformation is spread online, it has also been amplified by elected politicians who abuse the privileged platforms available to them. Council condemns without reservation the actions of any politician who seeks to target and scapegoat migrants as the cause of structural challenges within society, such as housing shortages. In particular, Council is disgusted by attempts to blame asylum seekers and refugees for patterns of crime and suggestions that they pose a particular threat to women and children through sexual crimes, which Council understands to be one of the oldest and nastiest of racist smears.

Council affirms the following to be true:

- People seeking asylum and people who have been given leave to remain in the UK as refugees have legal rights under the 1951 Refugee Convention and are not “illegal” – as those spreading disinformation claim - nor are the vast

majority of people who come from elsewhere to make their homes in Glasgow.

- Glasgow City Council is not responsible for the housing of people seeking asylum but officers from the HSCP work closely with Mears, the Home Office contractors who have this responsibility. There are no intentions to use former care homes or similar properties to accommodate asylum seekers in Glasgow and Glasgow City Council would not support any such plans.
- While there are significant numbers of people who have been given leave to remain in the UK as refugees among Glasgow's homeless population living in temporary accommodation, these individuals are not themselves responsible for housing pressures in the city, face the same challenges as other homeless people, and do not receive any special or priority treatment in the allocation of permanent accommodation.
- There is no evidence to suggest Glasgow is less safe for women and children than other parts of Scotland and the UK, and no evidence to suggest that there is a higher incidence of child sexual exploitation or sexual violence against women among asylum seekers and refugees than among the population at large.
- Glasgow builds more houses for social rent than any other local authority in the UK, more than Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Liverpool and Bristol combined in the last five years and has also used more CPOs to acquire empty homes than all other Scottish local authorities combined. Glasgow continues to have significant capacity to build and acquire more homes to address the housing emergency if funding is provided by governments.

Council believes that Governments at all levels have a role to play in combatting disinformation and the threat it poses to the safety of not only asylum seekers and refugees and people who work with them but also the wider BAME population.

Council therefore resolves to work across all levels of government, and with partners and stakeholders to ensure the rapid flow of relevant information when disinformation events occur, and asks that the Chief Executive write to partners such as the Home Office, Mears and Police Scotland to seek their undertaking to share relevant information quickly, and to work with Glasgow City Council and our partner agencies to combat disinformation as quickly as possible.

Furthermore, Council understands that disinformation responses must be ongoing and adaptive and therefore instructs officers to ensure that instances of disinformation and misinformation involving our city and Council are recorded to better respond to emerging trends.

Council understands however that Glasgow's unique position within the UK as an asylum dispersal authority and a magnet destination for people who have been given leave to remain creates particular pressures that may make it easier for disinformation to gain a foothold and which have made Glasgow a target for far-

right lies. Council therefore supports calls by the Leader of the Council and others for the Scottish Government to recognise and respond to Glasgow's specific needs in its ongoing response to the housing emergency; and for the UK Government to urgently provide Glasgow City Council with the necessary funding to address the severe impacts of UK policies that have created thousands of homeless refugees and to change its policy approach, which is putting unacceptable pressure on local authority budgets.

Finally, Council agrees that combatting the far-right disinformation threat calls for moral leadership from elected politicians at all levels and agrees that all councillors should reject racist fearmongering and defend democracy, human rights, and a society enriched by diversity, not threatened by it. Council understands that this means standing clearly and confidently for safe routes for people seeking asylum, properly funded services, and an asylum system that reflects the values we say we hold."

Councillor Carson, seconded by Councillor McDougall, moved as an amendment to delete:-

- (1) the fourth paragraph;
- (2) at the fifth paragraph "Council affirms the following the following to be true" and then the bullet points thereafter; and
- (3) the last two paragraphs and insert the following:

"Council acknowledges that the UK is facing extraordinary pressures following the impacts of international instability, climate change and the Conservative years of austerity, failure and mismanagement of the UK asylum system since 2010. Council believes the current situation is unsustainable; recognises that communities are under pressure; and does not believe that it is fair or just for individuals, families and those in need to be left abandoned in hotels or on asylum waiting lists.

Council welcomes recent UK Government action to tackle criminal gangs exploiting asylum seekers, secure our borders, reduce the asylum backlog and bring order and fairness to the asylum system.

Council believes that the health, safety and well-being of local communities as well as asylum seekers and refugees are paramount; and that all governments and local authorities have a responsibility in ensuring that local services are properly supported, by whatever means are within their gift, to help accomplish this in a joined up, fair and proportionate basis.

Council recalls regretfully that when Glasgow declared a housing emergency, the Scottish Government's response was to cut the affordable housing budget by 24%. Council believes this decision has exacerbated the crisis and undermined Glasgow's efforts to meet local housing need. And, that local authorities in Scotland, under the responsibility of the Scottish Government, are subject to more statutory duties than counterparts in other parts of the UK,

particularly in relation to the suspension of 'local connection', encouraging a 'magnet' factor attracting people to the city.

Council further notes that COSLA has consistently called for dispersal responsibilities to be shared across all of Scotland, and that the Scottish Parliament's Social Justice and Social Security Committee has raised concerns about Glasgow carrying this burden alone. This is not just Labour's position, it is the position of councils across Scotland. Every council knows that Glasgow cannot be left to shoulder this responsibility by itself.

Council therefore calls on the Scottish Government to review the impact of the suspension of section 33 (1) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, its effect on Glasgow, and to take the necessary supportive measures until such time as capacity is built up in other local authorities to ensure a fairer distribution of responsibility across Scotland. Council further calls for the restoration of affordable housing investment, proper funding of the housing emergency, and recognition of Glasgow's unique position as Scotland's principal asylum dispersal city.

Council further calls on the Scottish Government, working with COSLA and the UK Government, to develop a national dispersal strategy so that responsibility for asylum and refugee support is shared fairly across the country and not concentrated in Glasgow.

Finally, Council instructs the Leader of the Council to raise these matters formally with COSLA and the Scottish Government, and to report back to this chamber on progress."

Bailie Carroll, seconded by Bailie Hoy, moved as an amendment that:-

- (1) at the fourth paragraph, between "...housing shortages." and "In particular, Council..." insert the following:

"Council instead recognises the true causes of rot in our country has been driven by the continued reduction of investment in our communities through 15 years of austerity, and the bulk of the wealth which our communities create not being fairly re-distributed back into them, and instead is being kept by those most well off in society.";
- (2) at the second bullet point, after "...and Glasgow City Council", remove the rest of the sentence and replace with the following:

"has a long-standing position that this type of accommodation is inappropriate and would not support any such plans";
- (3) after the bulleted list, insert the following paragraph:

"Council commends the work which voluntary sector organisations including the Scottish Refugee Council, Positive Action in Housing and integration networks do in supporting refugees to transition into permanent

accommodation and in working with communities to build understanding and solidarity.”; and

- (4) in the penultimate paragraph, replace “magnet destination” with “destination of choice” and after “...to the housing emergency;”, replace the rest of the paragraph with the following:

“and for the leader of the Council to write to the Home Office, offering Glasgow’s MPs the opportunity to co-sign in support of the UK Government urgently providing Glasgow City Council with the necessary funding, including fast tracking funding for innovative pilot work which Glasgow has declared interest in regarding Asylum Accommodation to be allocated in this Autumn budget, to address the severe impacts of UK policies that have created thousands of homeless refugees and to change its policy approach, which is putting unacceptable pressure on local authority budgets, as well as continue to advocate for change in UK Government policy on the right to work for Asylum Seekers, which will help advance integration within communities through being given the same opportunities to work as others.”

During the debate, Councillor Aitken, Councillor Carson and Bailie Carroll, with the approval of their seconders, agreed to combine their motion and amendments resulting in the following adjusted motion:-

“Council believes that Glasgow’s diversity is one of its great strengths, and that since its founding 850 years ago, migration has been a singular factor in growing the city, building communities and shaping our identity.

More recently, Council acknowledges that we have welcomed thousands of new Glaswegians as the UK’s most prominent asylum dispersal city and remain the only part of Scotland with a significant refugee population. Well over 90% of all refugees and displaced people who settle in Scotland have made a home in Glasgow. Council understands that the global refugee crisis is only likely to grow and believes that wealthy countries like the UK have a moral and practical responsibility to play in addressing that. Council also believes that Glasgow’s ability to continue to play our very significant role in supporting the delivery of UK Government asylum and refugee policy and Scottish Government resettlement schemes must be adequately supported by those governments.

Council expresses its deep concern about an increase in deliberate disinformation about asylum seekers, refugees and migrants that aims to spread fear and alarm among local residents and disrupt community cohesion, and which have led to incidents in Glasgow and other towns and cities in recent months. Council understands that such disinformation is often orchestrated by far-right groups and individuals and believes that it has the potential to present a real risk to the safety and wellbeing of minority ethnic people in our communities.

Council understands that while much of this disinformation is spread online, it has also been amplified by elected politicians who abuse the privileged platforms available to them. Council condemns without reservation the actions of any politician who seeks to target and scapegoat migrants as the cause of structural

challenges within society, such as housing shortages. Council instead recognises the true causes of rot in our country has been driven by the continued reduction of investment in our communities through 15 years of austerity, and the bulk of the wealth which our communities create not being fairly re-distributed back into them, and instead is being kept by those most well off in society. In particular, Council is disgusted by attempts to blame asylum seekers and refugees for patterns of crime and suggestions that they pose a particular threat to women and children through sexual crimes, which Council understands to be one of the oldest and nastiest of racist smears.

Council affirms the following to be true:

- People seeking asylum and people who have been given leave to remain in the UK as refugees have legal rights under the 1951 Refugee Convention and are not “illegal” – as those spreading disinformation claim - nor are the vast majority of people who come from elsewhere to make their homes in Glasgow.
- Glasgow City Council is not responsible for the housing of people seeking asylum but officers from the HSCP work closely with Mears, the Home Office contractors who have this responsibility. There are no intentions to use former care homes or similar properties to accommodate asylum seekers in Glasgow and Glasgow City Council has a long-standing position that this type of accommodation is inappropriate and would not support any such plans.
- While there are significant numbers of people who have been given leave to remain in the UK as refugees among Glasgow’s homeless population living in temporary accommodation, these individuals are not themselves responsible for housing pressures in the city, face the same challenges as other homeless people, and do not receive any special or priority treatment in the allocation of permanent accommodation.
- There is no evidence to suggest Glasgow is less safe for women and children than other parts of Scotland and the UK, and no evidence to suggest that there is a higher incidence of child sexual exploitation or sexual violence against women among asylum seekers and refugees than among the population at large.
- Glasgow builds more houses for social rent than any other local authority in the UK, more than Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Liverpool and Bristol combined in the last five years and has also used more CPOs to acquire empty homes than all other Scottish local authorities combined. Glasgow continues to have significant capacity to build and acquire more homes to address the housing emergency if funding is provided by governments.

Council commends the work which voluntary sector organisations including the Scottish Refugee Council, Positive Action in Housing and integration networks do in supporting refugees to transition into permanent accommodation and in working with communities to build understanding and solidarity.

Council believes that Governments at all levels have a role to play in combatting disinformation and the threat it poses to the safety of not only asylum seekers and refugees and people who work with them but also the wider BAME population.

Council therefore resolves to work across all levels of government, and with partners and stakeholders to ensure the rapid flow of relevant information when disinformation events occur, and asks that the Chief Executive write to partners such as the Home Office, Mears and Police Scotland to seek their undertaking to share relevant information quickly, and to work with Glasgow City Council and our partner agencies to combat disinformation as quickly as possible.

Furthermore, Council understands that disinformation responses must be ongoing and adaptive and therefore instructs officers to ensure that instances of disinformation and misinformation involving our city and Council are recorded to better respond to emerging trends.

Council acknowledges that the UK is facing extraordinary pressures following the impacts of international instability, climate change and the Conservative years of austerity, failure and mismanagement of the UK asylum system since 2010. Council believes the current situation is unsustainable; recognises that communities are under pressure; and does not believe that it is fair or just for individuals, families and those in need to be left abandoned in hotels or on asylum waiting lists.

Council believes that the health, safety and well-being of local communities as well as asylum seekers and refugees are paramount; and that all governments and local authorities have a responsibility in ensuring that local services are properly supported, by whatever means are within their gift, to help accomplish this in a joined up, fair and proportionate basis.

Council therefore calls on the Scottish Government to review the impact of the suspension of section 33 (1) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987, its effect on Glasgow, and to take the necessary supportive measures until such time as capacity is built up in other local authorities to ensure a fairer distribution of responsibility across Scotland. Council further calls for the restoration of affordable housing investment, proper funding of the housing emergency, and recognition of Glasgow's unique position as Scotland's principal asylum dispersal city.

Council further calls on both Scottish and UK Governments, working with COSLA, to develop a national dispersal strategy so that responsibility for asylum and refugee support is shared fairly across the country and not concentrated in Glasgow.

Finally, Council instructs the Leader of the Council to raise these matters formally with COSLA and both Scottish and UK Governments, and to report back to this chamber on progress.

Finally, Council agrees that combatting the far-right disinformation threat calls for moral leadership from elected politicians at all levels and agrees that all councillors should reject racist fearmongering and defend democracy, human rights, and a

society enriched by diversity, not threatened by it. Council understands that this means standing clearly and confidently for safe routes for people seeking asylum, properly funded services, and an asylum system that reflects the values we say we hold.”

The motion, as adjusted, was thereafter unanimously approved.

### **Adjournment.**

**10** In terms of Standing Order No 17, the Council agreed to adjourn the meeting at 1330 hours until 1430 hours.

### **Resumption of meeting.**

**11** The meeting resumed at 1430 hours and the sederunt was taken as follows:-

Present: Chair, Lord Provost Jacqueline McLaren

JAMES ADAMS	LAURA DOHERTY	ELAINE McDOUGALL
SAQIB AHMED	STEPHEN DORNAN	DONNA McGILL
SUSAN AITKEN	SEAN FERGUSON	NORMAN MacLEOD
IMRAN ALAM	ELAINE GALLAGHER	ELAINE McSPORRAN
BLAIR ANDERSON	MARIE GARRITY	ANNE McTAGGART
KEN ANDREW	ZEN GHANI	CHRISTY MEARNS
ALEXANDER BELIC	ALLAN GOW	ANGUS MILLAR
RICHARD BELL	WILLIAM GRAHAM	MALCOLM MITCHELL
DECLAN BLENCH	SHARON GREER	JON MOLYNEUX
EVA BOLANDER	GREG HEPBURN	ROBERT MOONEY
ABDUL BOSTANI	FIONA HIGGINS	MARGARET MORGAN
PHILIP BRAAT	SEONAD HOY	EVA MURRAY
JILL BROWN	MHAIRI HUNTER	CECILIA O'LONE
HOLLY BRUCE	RASHID HUSSAIN	JILL PIDGEON
BILL BUTLER	DAN HUTCHISON	LINDA PIKE
GRAHAM CAMPBELL	FYEZA IKHLAQ	HANIF RAJA
CHRISTINA CANNON	EUNIS JASSEMI	DAVENA RANKIN
PAUL CAREY	ANN JENKINS	THOMAS RANNACHAN
ANTHONY CARROLL	LILITH JOHNSTONE	GEORGE REDMOND
JOHN CARSON	JIM KAVANAGH	LANA REID-MCCONNELL
ALLAN CASEY	RUAIRI KELLY	FRANNY SCALLY
ANNETTE CHRISTIE	ALEX KERR	SORYIA SIDDIQUE
STEPHEN CURRAN	THOMAS KERR	KIERAN TURNER
FEARGAL DALTON	KEVIN LALLEY	CATHERINE VALLIS
JOHN DALY	PAUL LEINSTER	MARTHA WARDROP
AUDREY DEMPSEY	FRANK MCAVEETY	ALEX WILSON
STEPHEN DOCHERTY	PAUL MCCABE	



Apology: Roza Salih.

Attending: M Millar, Director of Legal and Democratic Services; S Millar, Chief Executive; D Hutchison, Executive Director of Education Services; R Emmott, Executive Director of Financial Services; and C Edgar, Director of Communication and Corporate Governance.