



Mayor and Cabinet

Comments of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on the Borough of Sanctuary strategy

Date: tbc May 2023

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1.

Ward(s) affected: All (none specific)

Contributor: Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee

Outline and recommendations

This report informs the Mayor and Cabinet of the comments and views of the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee on the Borough of Sanctuary strategy.

Mayor and Cabinet is asked to consider the Committee's comments and ask the relevant officers to provide a response.

1. Summary

- 1.1. On Thursday 2 March 2023, the Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee considered a report from officers on the Borough of Sanctuary strategy ([link to the agenda](#)) The Committee reflected on the contents of the report – and received a presentation from officers as well as representations from an organisation working with refugees and asylum seekers in Lewisham. Following questions to officers, the Committee agreed to refer its views to Mayor and Cabinet.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Mayor and Cabinet is asked to consider the Committee's comments and ask the relevant officers to provide a response.

3. Safer Stronger Communities Select Committee views

- 3.1. The Committee believes that the Borough of Sanctuary strategy is of vital importance to the Council's work supporting the most vulnerable. It welcomes the work being carried out to deliver the strategy and it recognises and commends the work being carried out by community and voluntary sector organisations to ensure that those seeking sanctuary are supported and protected from harm. Nonetheless, there are opportunities to ensure that the sanctuary strategy is more effective. The Committee recommends that:

- Mayor and Cabinet should reiterate and reinforce the Borough of Sanctuary messaging across Council departments. It is important that there is management support for the delivery of the strategy in all parts of the organisation.
- There should be an enhanced focus on the delivery of operational work to deliver the Council's Borough of Sanctuary ambitions. Members are particularly concerned about potential discrepancies in decision-making processes and the delivery of frontline services for those seeking sanctuary.
- An assessment of the training needs for frontline staff in relevant directorates (specifically in social care and housing) should be carried out. The prioritisation and development of this work might include input from community and voluntary sector partners who have experience of engaging with the Council – and of supporting vulnerable families and individuals.
- An update on the use of migration dispersal funding should be provided to the Committee.
- There should be a risk assessment of the measures needed to ensure that the Council will be successful in its attempts to be reaccredited as a Borough of Sanctuary.
- A refugee and migrant champion should be appointed by the Mayor to act as a senior stakeholder and critical friend to the Council and its partners.
- Work should take place to communicate with Lewisham's partner organisations (including health, education and community safety) about what the Council expects of them in relation to the Borough of Sanctuary.
- Consideration should be given to the resources available for frontline work. Specific attention should be given to the funding available for community and voluntary sector organisations.
- Lewisham should work with its partners and with other local authorities to highlight the detrimental impacts of the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999) and the costs and harm caused by leaving people with no recourse to public funds.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. However, there will be implications arising from them implementation of the Committee's recommendations. These should be considered in the response.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1. The Constitution provides for select committees to refer reports to the Mayor and Cabinet, who are obliged to consider the report and the proposed response from the relevant Executive Director; and report back to the Committee within two months.

6. Equalities implications

- 6.1. Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. The Act included the public sector equality duty, replacing the separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.2. The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.3. There are no direct equalities implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. There will be implications arising from the implementation of the Committee's recommendations – these will need to be considered in the response.

7. Health and wellbeing implications

- 7.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. There may be implications arising from the implementation of the Committee's recommendations.

8. Further implications

- 8.1. There are no direct climate change or crime and disorder implications arising from the implementation of the recommendation in this report.

9. Report author and contact

- 9.1. If you have any questions about this report, then please contact: Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager) timothy.andrew@lewisham.gov.uk

Is this report easy to understand?

Please give us feedback so we can improve.

Go to <https://lewisham.gov.uk/contact-us/send-us-feedback-on-our-reports>