

Agenda item:

Title of meeting: Cabinet

Subject: "Still Human, Still Here"

Date of meeting: 3 December 2015

Report by: Robert Watt, Director of Adult Services

Wards affected: All

1. Recommendation

That Cabinet notes the report

2. Purpose

To inform Cabinet about the 'Still Human, Still Here' campaign.

3. Information Requested

'Still Human Still Here' is a broad coalition of 71 organisations that are campaigning to end restrictions placed on refused asylum seekers through extending asylum support, granting permission to work and access to health and education until the time of departure from the United Kingdom or their grant of leave to remain. The coalition believes that the current policy is inhumane and ineffective and is urging the Government to:

- Provide asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute with sufficient cash support so that they can meet their essential living needs until they are returned to their country of origin or are given permission to stay in the United Kingdom;
- Provide free access to healthcare for all asylum seekers while they are in the United Kingdom;
- Grant asylum seekers permission to work if their case has not been resolved within six months or they have been refused, but temporarily cannot be returned through no fault of their own;
- Improve decision making and ensure that all those in need of protection receive it.

'Still Human Still Here' seeks the following policy changes:

- If an asylum seeker's claim has not been concluded within six months through no fault of their own, they should be granted permission to work.
- Refused asylum seekers who temporarily cannot be returned to their country of origin through no fault of their own should be granted permission to work.
- The coalition brings together organisations that believe they can campaign more effectively with a common banner, by coordinating their resources, initiatives, skills and contacts.

4. Getting Involved

Individual organisations that (a) add value and resources to the campaign and/or; (b) tap into important constituencies of support or influence can sign up as supporters and are encouraged to engage in active campaigning on this issue. Key organisations that are interested but not actively involved in the work of the coalition can become observers.

The whole coalition meets quarterly with working groups meeting to follow up on specific advocacy issues related to the campaign, as required. These groups consist only of those with a direct contribution to make in that particular area and may operate by email.

No organisation can speak for 'Still Human Still Here', but rather as a supporter of it. Any organisation wishing to produce documents, undertake campaigning in the name of 'Still Human Still Here' or use the campaign's brand needs to get approval for this from the Advocacy Manager of 'Still Human Still Here'.

5. Joining Instructions

If the Council decided to join there are two pre-conditions which need to be fulfilled:

First, it would have to support Still Human's aims as outlined above.

Secondly, the Council would need to commit to actively supporting one or more of these goals, through service provision, awareness raising or campaigning. Currently there are 8 City Councils who have passed motions expressing concerns against the destitution of asylum seekers.

If the Council supports these goals it would have to give an idea of how it thinks it can actively support one or more of the objectives (e.g. through passing a motion in Council, having a debate on the consequences of destitution locally, lobbying the Government on the issue, etc.). The Council would then be put forward for membership at the next meeting of the coalition.

A list of campaign supporters are listed in Appendix A.

6. Update to Report to Members - issued by Democratic Services.

For information attached at Appendix B is an update to the report sent to Members on 10 February 2015, relating to Asylum Support in Portsmouth.

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Signed by (Director of Adult Services)

Appendices:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location