

Agenda item:



Title of meeting: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 9 July 2019

Subject: Portsmouth City of Sanctuary

Report From: David Williams, The Chief Executive

Report by: Caroline Hopper, Strategy Unit

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with information about the Portsmouth City of Sanctuary agenda, its implications for Portsmouth, the expectations and associated resource implications upon the Council as a supporter of this initiative. The report also seeks the advice of members on how we should respond to this agenda.

2. Recommendations

2.1. Cabinet is recommended to:

2.1.1 Note that there is local appetite for Portsmouth to become a recognised City of Sanctuary and that Portsmouth City Council has already openly pledged support for the agenda.

2.1.2 Agree that it is important that the Council responds to this agenda as one body.

2.1.3 Agree that the cost of establishing the scheme at £16,000 in 2019/20 for coordinating this activity and making sure the Council fulfils its obligation the City of Sanctuary are funded by a contribution from the Environment & Community Safety portfolio reserve.

3. Background

3.1 City of Sanctuary is a national movement, traditionally focused on enabling asylum seekers and refugees, fleeing violence and persecution, to be better understood, welcomed, safe and supported by local services and communities. It is underpinned by a charter, based upon three key principles:

- Learn (what it means to seek sanctuary);
- Embed (take positive action to be welcoming); and,
- Share (develop a culture of best practice and advocacy).

3.2 Established in 2005, with the support of Sheffield City Council and over 100 local community organisations, Sheffield became the UK's first 'City of Sanctuary'. This status was achieved through a collective commitment to welcome and inclusion, development of a range of community cohesion activities, a programme of awareness raising and advocacy, and development of befriending services.

3.3 In February 2019 the British Red Cross in partnership with ArtReach approached Portsmouth City Council seeking:

- Endorsement of 'Portsmouth City of Sanctuary';
- That the council actively seek ways of including and supporting those seeking sanctuary within their usual activities;
- That the Council be a supporter of Portsmouth City of Sanctuary;
- That the Council support Portsmouth City of Sanctuary to practically establish the agenda through sustainable governance and communication platforms.

3.4 This city's aspiration is to build work streams of action in respect of a broader range of people (asylum seekers, refugees, veterans, the homeless, and those suffering domestic abuse and hate crime) across the public, private, education and voluntary sector - making it a truly cross cutting agenda, relevant to a number of directorates within the Council.

3.5 Portsmouth City of Sanctuary launched on 19th June 2019 with the support of more than eighty local organisations, including endorsement from Portsmouth City Council. Locally the agenda is in its infancy, and the Council needs to consider how best to meet its own support pledge, whilst supporting the local aspirations in a way that is sustainable.

3.6 Prior to the Council's organisational endorsement of the agenda, several services areas within PCC's directorate of Children, Families and Education had already individually engaged with Portsmouth City of Sanctuary; having identified it as complementary to their own business as usual activities. No work has yet been undertaken internally in respect of the pledge principles of learn, embed and share. Given the broad reach of the agenda in Portsmouth, the Council needs to consider how to best move forward in an organised approach to enable benefits to be maximised and reduce duplication of effort.

4. Timeline

June 2019

PCC Endorse Portsmouth City of Sanctuary Launch.

Portsmouth City of Sanctuary Launch, PCC support social media coverage, Portsmouth News coverage (feature article) focuses on the Veteran element.

July- Sept 2019

Proposed - PCC assigns a strategic lead to this agenda who will bring together relevant departments and drive forward pledged commitments.

Proposed - PCC supports movement to develop sustainable governance structures.

Sept 2019 - April 2020

Proposed - PCC review of own organisational policy, business as usual activity and communication to align with City of Sanctuary vision and principles.

5. Implications for Portsmouth

5.1 The City of Sanctuary agenda provides support for marginalised people within Portsmouth but also provides opportunity for Portsmouth to be seen by residents, investors and visitors (including UK and International students) as an attractive and caring destination and place to live. The positive consequences of this narrative for the local economy and local authority are yet to be fully fiscally considered.

5.2 It is likely that there will be many benefits associated with increased partnership working. More tangibly this agenda holds the potential to reduce demand on core services over time through increased community capacity and through the development of more efficient support pathways. However getting this right will require appropriate internal capacity in the first instance to establish the necessary policies and processes and engagement frameworks. There is also potential for increased talent acquisition in areas of need such as teaching and health services. This would also require coordination to ensure potential benefits are maximised.

5.3 Whilst there is potential for reduced demand if this agenda is implemented effectively, highlighting the needs of vulnerable members of society holds the potential for increased demand on core service in the short term. There is also a potential for increased public awareness to convert into increased political pressure upon the local authority to manage issues, such as street homelessness and veterans mental health, managing this enquiry would impact some service areas. These dis-benefits would be short lived with internal capacity in place to ensure benefit realisation.

5.4 There is a potential for negative reputational damage if the Council is publically perceived to be inadequately supportive of the agenda or not meeting the commitments we have made.

5.5 Ensuring sufficient capacity to maximise beneficial and mitigate negative consequences associated with the agenda will have resource implications. There are options for ensuring all work required is undertaken effectively: backfill of existing strategic capacity, re-prioritising capacity within relevant service areas, and utilisation of existing resources within the HIVE, or combination of these. Reprioritising capacity to achieve the activity stated within the timeline in Section 4 has been estimated to cost approximately £16,000 (1 day per week strategic management and co-ordination for a period of 9 months). Resource may also be needed to develop wider stakeholder engagement, city wide partnerships and/or governance structures (although HIVE could support this work).

6. Reasons for recommendations

6.1 Portsmouth City of Sanctuary is an agenda with significant local interest. It will require capacity to maximise the benefits associated with this agenda and ensure a coherent and efficient organisation response. Without such capacity there is a risk of duplicated effort, missed opportunity, sustained increased demand on services, and organisational reputational damage.

7. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

7.1 A preliminary Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and reviewed by PCC Access & equality advisor.

8. Legal Implications/City Solicitor comments

8.1 There is no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

9. Director of Finance and Information Services comments

9.1 The cost of the resource required to establish the activity and place the scheme on a 'firm footing' outlined in paragraph 4 will be funded from the Environment & Community Safety portfolio reserve. As mentioned in para 5.3, there is the potential for the scheme to reduce demand and costs to the Council in the future.

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

Appendices:

None.

Signed by:

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DAVID WILLIAMS
Chief Executive
Portsmouth City Council