

Wiltshire Council

Council

26 February 2019

Notice of Motion No. 12 – Safe Passage Our Turn Campaign

From Councillors Ruth Hopkinson and Jon Hubbard

To consider the following motion submitted in accordance with the constitution:

Preamble

We are currently experiencing the world's largest refugee crisis since World War Two. UNHCR figures show that across the world 68.5m people are forcibly displaced. Over half of these are children, many unaccompanied.

Wiltshire has been proactive in caring for vulnerable child refugees (a significant number are abandoned at Leigh Delamere Service Station). 50 are currently being cared for as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Up to 103 Syrian refugees, around half of which are children have been accepted under the Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). In addition, Wiltshire has signed up to the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) which transfers children between authorities and from the Vulnerable Children Resettlement Scheme (VCPS)

Full council resolved in September 2015 to: "Participate in the Government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Programme and any other such schemes introduced to support other vulnerable persons seeking refugee status." This has been the motivation behind the work of the Council.

These schemes, VPRS (not VPRP as in the initial motion) & VCRS, are due to come to an end in early 2020, therefore in the light of previous motion, this one looks to enable Wiltshire Council to continue the good work that it has already committed to. This year is the 80th Anniversary of the Kindertransport, the scheme through which Britain welcomed 10,000 child refugees, in just 10 months, on the eve of World WarTwo, thereby saving their lives. Supported by the charity Safe Passage and a wide range of faith leaders and led by Lord Alf Dubs, the Our Turn campaign is echoing & commemorating the achievement of Kindertransport.

Under the new "Children At Risk" scheme, the Council will pledge to take 10 unaccompanied children per year for the next 10 years.

The costs will be met by Central Government which means Wiltshire can do the right thing at no cost to the Wiltshire Council Tax Payer. Many of our neighbouring authorities do not do their share or meet their responsibilities. If the Council adopts this scheme and children, arrive in an unplanned way, they will be relocated to neighbouring authorities in line with the NTS. This will leave Wiltshire Council being able to plan for children accepted under the scheme, whilst providing leadership in the Region.

The children received by Wiltshire will have been assessed by the UNHCR.

Therefore

Motion

That Wiltshire Council builds on its achievements in caring for vulnerable unaccompanied refugee children by supporting the Safe Passage Our Turn campaign, recognising the historical legacy of the Kindertransport, and pledges to welcome 10 at-risk refugee children per year for the next 10 years as part of a fully funded government child resettlement scheme.