

To: Cabinet
Date: 13 December 2023
Report of: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Title of Report: City of Sanctuary Accreditation

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Panel of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Cllr Lizzy Diggins, Panel Chair
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing
Corporate Priority:	Support Thriving Communities
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Housing and Homelessness Panel met on 05 December 2023 to consider an update on progress towards obtaining the City of Sanctuary Accreditation. It was recommended that the Panel receive a presentation followed by an opportunity for discussion; and agree any recommendations.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Linda Smith (Cabinet Member for Housing), Nerys Parry (Head of Housing Services), Richard Wood (Housing Strategy and Needs Manager) and Stephen Cohen (Refugee & Resettlement Manager) for attending the meeting to present and answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Stephen Cohen, Refugee & Resettlement Manager introduced the presentation and provided an overview of the work being done across the Council towards

obtaining the City of Sanctuary Accreditation. The Accreditation journey was owned jointly by Housing Services and Community Services; however the Accreditation journey was embedded across the whole Council and all other service areas were on board, including support from senior management. Accreditation was described as an evolving, ongoing process and once achieved the Council's Accreditation would be reviewed every three years.

4. The Panel asked a range of questions, including questions relating to assurance that the spirit of the Accreditation was being embraced Council-wide; partnership working with Oxfordshire County Council and other institutions; how different groups of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and their lived experiences fed into this work; advocacy work being undertaken by the Council; how City of Sanctuary work fed into the Council's inclusive economy work; Central Government policy surrounding migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; resource availability; and opportunities for cross-party input into the Accreditation journey.
5. In particular, during discussion the Panel noted that the Council planned to hold a much larger celebration to mark Refugee Week in June 2024. While the Panel agreed that this was welcome news, it agreed that it was vital for the Council to advocate for safe legal routes into the United Kingdom for those fleeing war, conflict and/or persecution – both during Refugee Week and more broadly on an ongoing basis. The Panel noted that this would link in with the lobbying element of the City of Sanctuary Accreditation work.

Recommendation 1: That the Council advocates for safe legal routes into the United Kingdom for those fleeing war, conflict and/or persecution during Refugee Week and more broadly on an ongoing basis, linking in with the lobbying element of the City of Sanctuary Accreditation work.

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