This Report will be made public on 29 September 2026

Report Number **A/26/20**

To:	**Council**
Date:	**7 October 2026**
Status:	**Non – executive decision**
Responsible Officer:	**Ewan Green, Monitoring Officer and Director of Strategy and Resources**

SUBJECT: MOTION ON NOTICE

SUMMARY: Councillor Jones has submitted a Motion on Notice for Full Council which asked members to support a number of actions in respect of seeking official City of Sanctuary status. This report provides background to assist Members in their consideration of the Motion.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **To receive and note report A/26/20.**
2. **To consider the Motion on Notice put forward by Councillor Jones.**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 21 September 2026, Councillor Jones submitted a Motion which asked members to resolve the following:

“This Council resolves:

1. *To defend free speech as a cherished British value but state clearly that inciting hatred or violence is criminal*

2. *To seek recognition as a District of Sanctuary.*

3. *To Sign up to the "City of Sanctuary" Charter and its principles and values.*

4. *To Join the "City of Sanctuary" local authority network.*

5. *To continue working with key partners, community groups and people who have escaped persecution to establish a timetable and action plan for achieving District of Sanctuary status.*

6. *To bring an initial report to Cabinet and full Council at the earliest opportunity outlining the action plan needed to obtain District of Sanctuary status.*

7. *To continue to work with key partners and community groups to create greater public awareness of the needs of people seeking sanctuary across the whole district, through a range of initiatives, projects and activities”.*

1.2 This report aims to support Members in the consideration of the Motion. It sets out the background in respect of the proposed motion.

2. BACKGROUND AND IMPLICATIONS

2.1 On 1 April 2026, Councillor Holgate asked the Leader a question at Full Council as to whether Folkestone & Hythe should align with its values of equality and inclusion by committing to the principles of the 'District of Sanctuary' scheme. The Leader responded that he recognised the concerns about divisive rhetoric around migration and agreed that the district should continue to demonstrate positive leadership that values compassion, inclusion, and our shared community values.

2.2 The Leader stated that the principles of the District of Sanctuary framework were centred on creating a welcoming environment for people seeking safety, ensuring fair access to services, and working constructively with local partners, voluntary organisations, and communities. These principles closely align with how the Council already delivers its services. He added that he welcomed the opportunity to explore this further and would ask

officers to examine the implications of working towards recognition under the District of Sanctuary model, including how it complements work already undertaken locally.

2.3 The full question and response can be found at: Minutes - Councillors questions and answers - final

2.4 As a result of this question, the following work has taken place:

- A search on how the scheme work reveals that The City of Sanctuary Scheme is operated by City of Sanctuary UK as registered charity (charity no. 1184613).

- It should be noted in terms of the motion that City of Sanctuary UK no longer operate the City/District/Regional level accreditation. They explain the current scheme as follows.

'Prior to Dec 2020, City of Sanctuary UK used to run a locale-wide assessment process for cities, towns and other places. After much reflection and consultation, this process which saw whole cities and town designated as places of sanctuary, was scrapped. What replaced it is an institution-by-institution approach to embedding welcome locally. The Local Authority network was born, along with the Council of Sanctuary award. Councils are a key local institution that has the potential to lead the way in creating a tapestry of organisations, institution and places that seek to include and support people of sanctuary seeking background.' Sanctuary Awards - City of Sanctuary UK

- This means that the council if it was interested in accreditation would need to seek an institutional award as a 'Council of Sanctuary'

- The motion calls for an action plan to achieve accreditation to be presented to cabinet. It is anticipated based on the Sanctuary Award Criteria that the action/implication plan would likely require additional budget and staff resourcing.

Potential costs include:

  - A dedicated officer to support the operation of the scheme.
  - External support for completing a review of existing policies and procedures.
  - Establishing and supporting a local City of Sanctuary Group. In other areas, these are often established as a standalone local charity.

2.5 Subject to council approval of the motion, the next stage would be to complete a detailed assessment of the project costs and other resource implications of the work needed to achieve accreditation along with a review of the potential benefits of the scheme to be reported to cabinet for approval and inclusion in 27/28 budget setting process.

3. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

3.1 **Legal Officer's Comments (KP)**

The legal framework for Councillors to bring motions for consideration by Full Council is set out in the Local Government Act 1972, including section 99 and Schedule 12, which provide the statutory framework for local authority meetings and proceedings. The Council's Constitution and Council Procedure Rules govern the submission, debate and determination of motions.

In considering the Motion, Members may also have regard to the general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, which enables the Council to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to the limitations and restrictions in sections 2 to 4 of that Act.

Any decision, and any steps taken to implement the Motion must be in accordance with the Council's Constitution, budgetary framework and scheme of delegation.

The Motion would express the Council's position and proposed next steps, but would not of itself confer Sanctuary status, approve expenditure for which no budget has been identified, or authorise action reserved to Cabinet or officers.

Any subsequent proposal to seek a Council of Sanctuary award, develop an action plan or commit resources would need to follow the appropriate decision making process and be supported by such further legal, financial, procurement, equality and evidential assessment as may be required.

Subject to those qualifications, there are no additional legal implications arising directly from Members' consideration of the Motion.

3.2 **Finance Officer's Comments (SO)**

At this stage, the financial implications of seeking and maintaining Council of Sanctuary accreditation have not been fully assessed. Should the motion be supported and progressed, further work would be required to determine the resource requirements and other costs associated with achieving and maintaining accreditation.

3.3 **Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)**

The motion has the potential to have a positive equalities impact by promoting inclusion, fostering good relations and supporting fair access to Council services for people seeking sanctuary. Although refugee or asylum-seeker status is not itself a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, people seeking sanctuary may share protected characteristics, including race, religion or belief, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, or gender reassignment, and may experience disadvantage or barriers to accessing services. Any future decision to pursue Council of Sanctuary accreditation, and any associated action plan, should therefore be informed by engagement with affected communities and an

equality impact assessment. This should consider accessibility, language and communication needs, the avoidance of stigma or discrimination, and whether any proposed actions could have differential impacts. This approach would support the Council in having due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

3.4 **Climate Change Implications (JWi):**

There are no significant direct climate change implications arising from this report. In line with the Council's District-wide Carbon Strategy's commitment to a fair, inclusive and climate-resilient district, a City of Sanctuary status will support vulnerable community members who are disproportionately affected by climate risks such as heatwaves, flooding, cold homes, fuel poverty and barriers to accessing information and services.

4. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

Ewan Green, Director of Strategy and Resources
ewan.green@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk
The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

Minutes – Full Council 1 April 2026 - Minutes - Councillors questions and answers - final