

COUNCIL MEETING 21ST NOVEMBER 2024

Question posed by Polly Campbell-Preston

Good evening,

As both a Bath resident and a member of the human race, I would like to address point 7 of the measures, which the Council pledged to undertake in July, when the Peace motion was unanimously passed, whereby it

calls on the government to ensure that there are safe and legal routes for refugees and to reform the UK resettlement scheme to allow a route to safety for the most vulnerable in Gaza with emergency pathways for those seeking refuge from the conflict and emphasises our readiness as a community in Bath and North East Somerset to provide support and open our arms to innocent people displaced and affected by these events, as the community did for refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine.

I wouldn't like to pour cold water on any part of this statement, but I haven't formed quite the same impression of the help bestowed upon fleeing Syrians and Afghans, in relation to that offered to their Ukrainian counterparts. This is only subjective conjecture on my part, and it is arguably possible that quantitative data could dispel this. Indeed, the level of support, welcome and solidarity shown to Ukrainians, fleeing the invasion of their country, has no doubt set a truly wonderful precedent for how we will, henceforth, be honouring our duty towards ALL those fleeing oppression, occupation and imminent danger to life. I can only imagine the frustration and helplessness you must be feeling - as are we - at not being able to offer the same open arms to those, desperately trying to escape the unimaginably barbaric horrors being meted out on Palestinians in Gaza.

My question is this: To whom was the plea for emergency pathways conveyed and what was their response? I fervently hope the reply wasn't filled with platitudes and faux concern. Whilst, as elected representatives, you might be feeling as demoralised as we the public are, you have the unique opportunity of being able to communicate directly with central Government.

The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said: "Do your little bit of good where you are. It's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world". Were all local councils to overwhelm Government channels with their voices, imagine what good could come from it. Can we therefore take it as read that the Council is clamouring as loudly as it is able, through all available channels; and is leaving no stone unturned, to ensure implementation of these measures?

Thank you.