

**SUBJECT: COUNCIL OF SANCTUARY formally referred to as 'COUNTY OF SANCTUARY**

**MEETING: PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 22nd JULY 2025**

**DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

## **1. PURPOSE:**

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny with an overview of the steps required for Monmouthshire to achieve Council of Sanctuary status and the opportunity to engage early in the development of the Sanctuary Strategy.
- 1.2 To provide a proposed action plan and timeline that will steer future activity that will be required to deliver this ambition.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 2.1 That the committee review the process and actions required to meet the criteria to make a formal application to achieve Council of Sanctuary accreditation and provide initial feedback to help shape the development of this work.
- 2.2 That scrutiny members encourage and support engagement from those with lived experience in our county to inform and shape the actions to be taken by the Council, partners and other stakeholders.

## **3. BACKGROUND:**

- 3.1 City of Sanctuary UK leads a movement across the UK to create welcoming communities for people seeking sanctuary - and for everyone. Solid collaboration creates opportunities to transform schools, Councils, Universities and entire neighbourhoods into vibrant spaces of belonging. By building genuine understanding and partnerships, City of Sanctuary create places where everyone can participate, lead, and thrive together.
- 3.2 Councils, as key public sector anchors, play an important role in promoting inclusion within their own organisations, the wider community, and with other local statutory and voluntary sector partners. The 'Council of Sanctuary' award process and minimum criteria for recognition are therefore tailored to the specific contextual challenges and opportunities within local government, and the role they play in welcoming and supporting people seeking sanctuary.

- 3.3 On the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2022 Cabinet committed to beginning the process of formally applying to become a county of sanctuary for those fleeing persecution. This was followed by a motion at full council in September 2023 which received cross party support.
- 3.4 Full details of the procedure and criteria are available at [Councils Award Procedure and Criteria 2025](#) which should be read as an appendix to this report.
- 3.5 By applying for Council of Sanctuary status, Monmouthshire County Council aims to highlight and build upon the positive work already taking place across local communities. This process will help the Council identify and address service gaps within its control—not necessarily through new investment, but by challenging existing policies and practices to better meet the needs of sanctuary seekers.

#### **4. NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE FOR AWARD:**

- 4.1 A draft action plan will be developed, outlining both the award criteria and the necessary actions required to meet the threshold for acceptance.
- 4.2 Part of the award criteria is to produce a Council of Sanctuary strategy prior to submission.
- 4.3 The proposed timeline for submission of the formal application to made by the end of the 25/26 financial year. Noting, that prior to any formal submission the strategy must be developed and approved by Cabinet.

#### **5. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):**

- 5.1 The proposal to become a county of sanctuary is about improving outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers by providing a welcoming environment, challenging discrimination and negative perceptions and ensuring equality of opportunity where possible within UK Immigration law. It strives to promote good relations between groups ensuring vibrant and cohesive communities.
- 5.2 Council of Sanctuary promotes the positive impact that migration has on the economy and the potential for improved outcomes for some groups who will have fled persecution in their home country because of their sexual orientation or religious beliefs. It may also highlight challenges, such as pressure on local housing which may need to be considered in Local Development Plans and Local Housing Market Assessments

**6. OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

N/A

**7. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

- 7.1 The success of the application to become an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary network will be determined by a third party, based on the strength and evidence submitted as part of the application process.

**8. REASONS:**

- 8.1 To raise awareness of the activity being undertaken to become a Council of Sanctuary.
- 8.2 To align the work of the Council towards the visions and values of the City of Sanctuary movement whilst continuing to provide statutory asylum support

**9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

- 9.1 Membership of the City of Sanctuary network carries no financial cost or risk.
- 9.2 Staff resource implications would need to be managed within the service area, however there is no requirement for additional staffing to progress this work.

**10. CONSULTEES:**

Not applicable at this stage

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Cabinet Report:

[https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/documents/s33384/A%20County%20of%20Sanctuary\\_Cabinet\\_221109.pdf](https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/documents/s33384/A%20County%20of%20Sanctuary_Cabinet_221109.pdf)

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