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27th September 2024

Councillor Brian Steele
Chair of OSMB

Via email: brian.steele@rotherham.gov.uk

Dear Cllr Steele

Petition: Rotherham's Commitment to a Permanent Ceasefire and To Promote Peace in Palestine and in the Region

As promised in the Cabinet Meeting on Monday 16th September, I am formally writing to set out in some detail the Council's response to the Petition following the decisions made at Cabinet.

The response was as follows:

a) Publicly condemn the Israeli Government's human rights violations

Cabinet notes that the resolution of the Council on 28th February in response to the Petition included "...publicly condemning the human rights violations being conducted". This includes human rights violations by the Israeli Government. As a consequence, Cabinet is clear that the Council condemns human rights violations.

b) Demand the UK Government call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

Cabinet also notes that on the 28th February the Council called on the UK Government for a permanent ceasefire to be adopted. This remains the position of the Council and Cabinet is again clear that the position of the UK Government should be (as it presently is) that there should be a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

c) That the Council issue a press release explaining the resolution agreed in the debate held on 28 February 2024.

A press release will be published explaining both the resolution agreed by Council on the 28th February and additionally the outcome of the considerations of OSMB following this meeting.

- d) **In the interests of transparency, that the Council publishes details of whether the Council has formal associations with the Israeli government.**

Officers will consider this and write to the lead petitioner with the outcome of this work.

- e) **That the Council reviews its contractual relationships to establish if it has links with any of the companies named in the UN Human Rights Council's list as part of the Council's visible supply chain.**

Officers will consider this and write to the lead petitioner with the outcome of that work.

- f) **Notes the restrictions placed on local authorities in respect of the factors which they may take into account when procuring goods or services under Section 17 of the 1988 Local Government Act.**

Cabinet notes that the provisions of the Section above and this this curtails the factors that the Council is lawfully entitled to consider when making decisions on the procurement of goods and services.

- g) **With respect to the request within the petition to prioritise human rights and equality in Rotherham's international relations, especially for the Palestinian people, the OSMB response noted that the Council cannot implement this recommendation as it is stated in the petition, as international relations fall to central rather than local government.**

Cabinet notes the OSMB response to this request.

- h) **Notes that the Council no longer has active twinning arrangements, and it is not recommended that these recommence.**

Cabinet notes the recommendation.

- i) **Notes the strength of Rotherham's local communities in supporting communities in need around the world. This includes promoting values such as human rights and equality which the Council supports.**

Cabinet notes the recommendation.

- j) **Reiterates its commitment to its Ethical Procurement Policy and notes that the Council will always procure services in line with this Policy.**

Cabinet is pleased that the commitment to Ethical Procurement through its Policy is noted and that it guides our Services in procuring Services.

- k) **Publishes an overview of its investments on its website.**

Cabinet supports this recommendations and Officers will be asked to provide this information on the Council's website.

- l) **Requests that South Yorkshire Pension Authority publishes its investments on its website.**

Cabinet will ask South Yorkshire Pension Authority to publish details of its investments on its websites.

- m) **Notes that the discretion of the Council to make ethical procurement decisions in respect of not supporting countries with illegal occupations or companies benefitting from such activities was removed under s.17 of the Local Government Act, 1988.**

Cabinet notes the recommendation.

- n) **To enable councils to reflect on the concerns of communities that they are elected to represent, that the Leader writes to the relevant Minister to a) request the repeal of those sections of the Local Government Act 1988 which prohibit councils from taking 'non-commercial considerations' into account when awarding contracts and b) in opposition to the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill currently before Parliament.**

Cabinet agrees to this recommendation and the Leader will write to the relevant Minister to make this point.

- o) **Approve to the display of the Palestinian flag as a gesture of solidarity to those in Gaza and the wider region who are affected by the conflict and support peace on the United Nation's International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (29 November 2024).**

Cabinet agrees to this recommendation and approves the flying of the Palestinian Flag on 29th November.

- p) **Notes the efforts of the community in organising visible gestures of solidarity to those in Gaza and the wider region who are affected by the conflict and support peace.**


Cabinet notes the recommendation.

- q) **That elected members are reminded that under the existing Flag Protocol, a motion to support a cause or campaign, which can include the flying of a flag, can be submitted to Council for decision.**

Cabinet notes this recommendation and will ask that this information is included in the next bulletin that is produced for all Councillors.

Thank you to you and your OSMB colleagues for the work you have done with the petitioners and to get the Council to this position.

Yours sincerely



**Councillor Chris Read
Leader of Rotherham Council**