

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

19 September 2020

## **West Sussex County Councillors Unite to acknowledge support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

**Councillors gave their unanimous support for a Liberal Democrat motion that acknowledges the vital role that West Sussex County Council plays in supporting unaccompanied asylum seeking children.**

At a meeting of the full council of West Sussex County Council on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> September, Cllr Kirsty Lord (Lib Dem, Hassocks and Burgess Hill South) gained unanimous cross party support for a motion recognising the work of West Sussex County Council in caring for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Cllr Lord was prompted to table the motion following a summer in which increasing numbers of people have arrived by boat to seek asylum in the UK.

West Sussex County Council plays a vital role in looking after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. It currently has seventy-six children in its care, and in February 2020 reaffirmed its commitment to accept the transfer of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from Kent and Portsmouth on a regional rota. This is in addition to caring for children who arrive at Gatwick. So far this year WSCC has taken 8 children from Kent. Heartfelt thanks were extended to the foster families who go to such lengths to give these children a home and a new start.

Speaking after the debate. Cllr Lord said, "When we look beyond the lurid media headlines, we find local government, foster families and humanitarian charities working tirelessly to help give some of the most vulnerable people on the planet a new start. I am proud to be a member of a council that has gone above and beyond its minimum statutory obligations. It is a very polarised time in politics, especially on issues like this. However County Councillors have shown leadership and demonstrated that we can hold different views but still find common ground in our commitment to treating refugees and asylum seekers with dignity, compassion and respect, and I was pleased to hear that the Council is looking at how to extend some of the funding in this area beyond June 2021."

The county council motion is one element of a month of awareness raising about the plight of refugees that is being led by the Liberal Democrats in Mid Sussex. On 30<sup>th</sup> September, District Councillor Benedict Dempsey will lead a debate at Mid Sussex District Council on the need to treat asylum seekers and refugees with dignity, compassion and respect and throughout September, a team of Liberal Democrats is taking part in the Red Cross's 'Miles for Refugees' sponsored event. By running, cycling, and walking hundreds of miles, they hope to raise more than £2,000."

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**ENDS**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:**

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**NOTES TO EDITOR:**

1. The team can be sponsored here <https://miles-for-refugees-2020.everydayhero.com/uk/mid-sussex-lib-dems>
2. The wording of the WSCC motion can be found here:  
<https://westsussex.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g2633/Public%20reports%20pack%2018th-Sep-2020%2010.30%20County%20Council.pdf?T=10>
3. The wording of the Mid Sussex District Council motion is  
Mid Sussex District Council:
  1. Notes that the issue of refugees and people seeking asylum currently has a raised media profile in the UK.
  2. Acknowledges that the issue of asylum and international migration is a highly complex issue without simple solutions.
  3. Recognises that the UK has a proud tradition of providing sanctuary to refugees who have been displaced by conflict and persecution.
  4. Affirms Mid Sussex's pride in having refugees living as part of our communities in the District.
  5. Emphasises that, notwithstanding differing views, anyone engaged in discourse on this issue has a responsibility to treat the people involved with dignity, compassion and respect.