

Afghanistan – Motion as adjusted approved, after division.

7 Councillor Aitken, seconded by Councillor Doherty, moved that:-

“Council has watched with horror the tragic situation in Afghanistan as the takeover of the country by the Taliban has seen the collapse of democratically elected government and national institutions and the reverse of 2 decades of fragile progress in the establishment of human rights, particularly for women and girls.

Council expresses its deep sympathy and solidarity with the Afghan people and with Glasgow’s Afghan community, many of whom came here as refugees from war and past Taliban atrocities and abuses, and who now live in fear for the safety of family members still living in Afghanistan. Council deeply regrets that the sacrifices and losses suffered by the Afghan people and UK and international armed forces personnel have led to this outcome and believes that it counts among the biggest foreign policy failure of modern times.

Council particularly fears for the safety of Afghan women and girls, recalling that when the Taliban were last in control, women and girls were denied education, employment, participation in public life and freedom of movement and stripped of their most basic liberties and human rights. Council is extremely sceptical of Taliban claims that this won’t be repeated and urges the UK Government not to take any statements of assurance by the Taliban at face value.

Council notes that Glasgow has so far agreed to receive 64 refugees under the UK Government Afghan Resettlement Scheme; further notes that Glasgow HSCP officers are working with RSL partners to identify suitable accommodation to house more refugees; and instructs the Chief Executive to explore every available avenue to further increase the numbers of Afghan refugees we are able to accommodate safely and securely in the city.

Council believes that the UK’s Afghan Refugee Resettlement Scheme currently falls short of what is required proportionate to the scale of the unfolding humanitarian emergency. Council believes that the past actions of UK governments have significantly contributed to the creation of this crisis and that the UK has a moral obligation to do everything it can do aid the Afghan people, in particular women, children and those on whom the Taliban is likely to seek vengeance for having served in the Afghan armed forces or other national institutions. Council therefore calls on the UK Government to go further and faster in its response both in the provision of aid and in supporting the evacuation and safe resettlement of Afghan nationals, ensuring that further immediate resources are made available to support local authorities to significantly increase the numbers of Afghan refugees they are able to accommodate. Council instructs the Chief Executive to seek further resources from the UK Government to support Glasgow’s resettlement work.

Council notes finally that the proposals in the UK Government’s Nationality and Borders Bill - which would breach the UN Refugee Convention by seeking to criminalise asylum-seeking people who arrive in the UK via another country and

which would reduce the rights of refugees living in the UK and diminish the support given to asylum seekers – are even more egregious in the light of the Afghan refugee crisis, and pledges its support to campaigns by the Scottish Refugee Council and others to oppose this anti-refugee bill.”

Councillor O’Lone, seconded by Councillor Gray, moved as an amendment that the following words at paragraph 5 be deleted “Council believes that the past actions of UK governments have significantly contributed to the creation of this crisis and that” and replaced with “Council believes that, due to its involvement in NATO intervention,”.

Councillor Connelly, seconded by Councillor Blockley, moved as an amendment that:-

“Council notes the recent withdrawal of UK armed forces from Afghanistan following 20 years of conflict. Council grieves the loss of 457 UK armed forces personnel who died whilst on deployment and pays tribute to the service of the 2,209 armed forces personnel who were wounded in action. Council further thanks all of the Armed Forces and associated personnel who served as part of the UK’s involvement in Afghanistan since 2001.

Council understands that in February 2020 the United States of America signed an agreement with the Taliban to withdraw all forces by 1st May 2021, a deal which was subsequently extended by President Joe Biden who announced that US troops would withdraw from Afghanistan starting on 1st May and ending on 11th September.

Council notes that such action has created significant hardship for the people of Afghanistan and that, as a result of the United Kingdom’s involvement in the conflict there, we have a particular obligation to protect those Afghans who worked with our forces and others – particularly women, girls, and minorities that are fleeing persecution.

Council notes the UK Government’s attempts to secure a coordinated international response to this crisis; including calling for a virtual G7 leaders’ summit, emergency NATO and UN Security Council meetings, as well as working with allies to stress the importance of any recognition of a new Afghan Government to happen on a joint rather than unilateral basis. The UK Government has also made it clear that the Taliban must protect and uphold human rights, including those of women, girls and minorities, and that they can expect to face sanctions or the suspension of Overseas Development Assistance if they commit human rights abuses or host terrorist organisations.

Council notes that since 14th August the UK Government’s evacuation from Kabul, Operation Pitting, has rescued more than 15,000 civilians from Afghanistan. This number includes more than 8,000 Afghans eligible under the UK’s relocation scheme for those who worked for the UK Government and other vulnerable individuals, as well as more than 4,000 British passport holders, and 2,100 children. Council notes that since 1996, more than 36,000 Afghans have been granted asylum in the UK and the UK Government has plans to assist

25,000 additional Afghan refugees in relocating to the UK. The UK Government further halted all deportation to Afghanistan before the Taliban took control of the country.

Council believes that both of Scotland's governments must now work together to ensure that as much support as possible is available for our veterans and the refugees that are now making their home in the United Kingdom. Council resolves to work closely with all relevant parties to ensure that Afghan refugees who settle in Glasgow receive all the support and assistance they are rightly entitled to."

Bailie Dr Bartos, seconded by Councillor Elspeth Kerr, moved as an amendment that the first paragraph of the amendment by Councillor Connelly be added to the motion.

Councillor Aitken, with the approval of her seconder, accepted the amendments by Councillor O'Lone and Bailie Dr Bartos resulting in the following adjusted motion:-

"Council notes the recent withdrawal of UK armed forces from Afghanistan following 20 years of conflict. Council grieves the loss of 457 UK armed forces personnel who died whilst on deployment and pays tribute to the service of the 2,209 armed forces personnel who were wounded in action. Council further thanks all of the Armed Forces and associated personnel who served as part of the UK's involvement in Afghanistan since 2001.

Council has watched with horror the tragic situation in Afghanistan as the takeover of the country by the Taliban has seen the collapse of democratically elected government and national institutions and the reverse of 2 decades of fragile progress in the establishment of human rights, particularly for women and girls.

Council expresses its deep sympathy and solidarity with the Afghan people and with Glasgow's Afghan community, many of whom came here as refugees from war and past Taliban atrocities and abuses, and who now live in fear for the safety of family members still living in Afghanistan. Council deeply regrets that the sacrifices and losses suffered by the Afghan people and UK and international armed forces personnel have led to this outcome and believes that it counts among the biggest foreign policy failure of modern times.

Council particularly fears for the safety of Afghan women and girls, recalling that when the Taliban were last in control, women and girls were denied education, employment, participation in public life and freedom of movement and stripped of their most basic liberties and human rights. Council is extremely sceptical of Taliban claims that this won't be repeated and urges the UK Government not to take any statements of assurance by the Taliban at face value.

Council notes that Glasgow has so far agreed to receive 64 refugees under the UK Government Afghan Resettlement Scheme; further notes that Glasgow HSCP officers are working with RSL partners to identify suitable accommodation to house more refugees; and instructs the Chief Executive to explore every available avenue to further increase the numbers of Afghan refugees we are able to accommodate safely and securely in the city.

Council believes that the UK's Afghan Refugee Resettlement Scheme currently falls short of what is required proportionate to the scale of the unfolding humanitarian emergency. Council believes that due to its involvement in NATO intervention, the UK has a moral obligation to do everything it can do aid the Afghan people, in particular women, children and those on whom the Taliban is likely to seek vengeance for having served in the Afghan armed forces or other national institutions. Council therefore calls on the UK Government to go further and faster in its response both in the provision of aid and in supporting the evacuation and safe resettlement of Afghan nationals, ensuring that further immediate resources are made available to support local authorities to significantly increase the numbers of Afghan refugees they are able to accommodate. Council instructs the Chief Executive to seek further resources from the UK Government to support Glasgow's resettlement work.

Council notes finally that the proposals in the UK Government's Nationality and Borders Bill - which would breach the UN Refugee Convention by seeking to criminalise asylum-seeking people who arrive in the UK via another country and which would reduce the rights of refugees living in the UK and diminish the support given to asylum seekers – are even more egregious in the light of the Afghan refugee crisis, and pledges its support to campaigns by the Scottish Refugee Council and others to oppose this anti-refugee bill.”

On a vote being taken by calling the roll, 5 members voted for the amendment by Councillor Connelly and 75 for the motion as adjusted, which was accordingly declared to be carried.