

NOTICE OF MOTION REGARDING CEASEFIRE

Council:	22 February 2024
Report Author	Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Yates, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Ward:	All Wards

Executive Summary:

This Council is being asked to consider a notice of motion requesting that the Council resolves to call upon the UK Government and Opposition Government to call for an immediate ceasefire and open humanitarian corridors into Gaza to allow aid and other vital medical resources to flow in. Additionally, to provide an opportunity to seek the immediate release of all hostages and all Palestinians held in arbitrary military detention.

Recommendation(s):

With reference to the options in section 2.0 of the report, Council is invited to consider the motion.

Corporate Implications:

Financial and Value for Money

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Legal

This motion has been allowed in accordance with the provisions of procedure rule 3,8 (a) (i) which provides the following:

Motions must be about matters for which the Council has responsibility or which affect the district.

Council Procedure Rule 3.7 provides that: "the Member whose name appears first on the notice will move the motion during his or her speech and call for a seconder. If seconded, a

Member from the controlling political group will be entitled to a reply, after which the motion shall stand referred without further discussion to the Cabinet or appropriate committee for determination or report unless the Council decides to debate the motion in accordance with Rule 16" (*rules of debate*)

Risk

Corporate

Council Procedure Rule 3 provides the opportunity for Councillors to give advance notice of motions to be put to Council.

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

There are no specific equality issues arising from the decision to debate this Motion.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- *To keep our district safe and clean*
- *To work efficiently for you*

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 The following motion has been received from Councillor Wing in accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 3:

"That this Council:-

(a) notes:-

i. In response to the Hamas-led attacks on 7th October, that 'by mid-December the Israeli army has dropped 29,000 bombs, munitions and shells on the strip. Nearly 70% of Gaza's 439,000 homes and half of its buildings have been damaged or destroyed' (1) . Gaza is one of the most densely populated places in the world and home to 2.2 million Palestinians (2) (of whom almost half are children) (3) .

ii. 'As of 21 st January 2024, 25,105 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza and another 62,681 wounded'

(4) . Over 1 million Palestinians have been displaced, and many of the killed and injured are children (5) .

iii. That collective punishment (6) is against international law under the Geneva Conventions. (7) .

iv. This escalation in violence has been felt acutely across the district by residents and in particular

among health care workers and clinical staff at QEQM hospital, the main medical centre for Thanet, which has a far higher level of diversity than the general population, some of whom have lost loved ones. That residents in Thanet, as in other communities, have been further affected by the rise in antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents across the UK and elsewhere. Thanet has a significant Jewish community and heritage, and 'more than seven out of ten Jews living in the UK have family in Israel, making the horrific 7 th October attack by Hamas personal' (8) . UK Police have also reported a 'record rise in religious hate crimes, with the Community Safety Trust, a Jewish charity describing the figures as 'shocking' and campaigners against Anti-Muslim abuse stating they are 'deeply worrying'. It further notes that it is affecting communities 'trust in authorities and their sense of identity and belonging' (9) . The lack of criticism by Thanet District Council for the unprecedented attacks on a predominantly Muslim/brown civilian population is having a further impact on this part of our community.

v. That the Israeli government have cut off water, food, and electricity to Gaza which is a recognised war crime under International Humanitarian Law (10) .

vi. That on the 30 th October 2023 the World Bank warned that 'oil prices could reach \$150 in 2024 due to the consequences of the war leading to further oil supply disruption' which would 'inevitably mean higher food prices' (11) . 'The IMF estimates that a sustained 10% increase in oil prices shaves 0.15 percentage points off global economic growth and adds 0.4 points to inflation in the following year'. It further adds that 'the cost of a barrel of crude oil is now about 10% higher than it was before the Hamas attack' (12) . Government poverty data continues to rank 'Thanet as the most deprived local authority in Kent', it also 'has the most LSOAs within the most deprived decile with 18' and has seen no change since 2015 (13) . Clearly, the impact of increased food and fuel prices now and as predicted into the coming year, will be felt by all Thanet residents but disproportionately felt by the significant number of residents that live in poverty. In addition, higher costs will also negatively affect the Councils finances. With no end in sight and tensions growing 'if the conflict spreads to major oil-producing nations in the region such as Iran, the global economy could face severe repercussions as energy costs for businesses and households spike' (14) .

(b) believes:-

i. What is happening in Gaza is a humanitarian catastrophe with horrific escalations of violence.

ii. Loss of all civilian lives and atrocities committed against civilians in both the Hamas attacks and the continuing bombardment of the Gaza strip by Israel, is horrific and must be condemned and investigated.

iii. All forms of racism, including Anti-Palestinian racism, Antisemitism and Islamophobia have no place in Thanet or the wider world and condemns any attacks on these groups

iv. Polls show that UK citizens surveyed overwhelmingly support a humanitarian ceasefire (15) , which has been called for by the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF, Save the Children, the head of the WHO, as well as Oxfam. While Ipsos found '7 out of 10 UK citizens are concerned about the impact of the conflict on Palestinians and Israeli civilians' and that they 'are more likely to want the UK Government to be a neutral mediator or not be involved at all than support a particular side' (16) .

v. All political leaders, at all levels of government, have duties under international law to prevent genocide; and that

vi. Thousands of Thanet residents have joined protests, meetings and other events and gatherings, written to MPs, or contacted their councillors backing these calls for a ceasefire (17) (18) (19) (20) (21) (22) (23) (24) (25) (26) (27) (28) (29) .

(c) therefore resolves to:-

(i) call upon the UK Government and Opposition Government to:-

i. call for an immediate ceasefire,

ii. open humanitarian corridors into Gaza to allow aid and other vital medical resources to flow unhindered in,

iii. provide an opportunity to seek the immediate release of all hostages and all Palestinians held in arbitrary military detention,

iv. call for an arms embargo to be enacted by all involved in the conflict and

v. call on Israel to resume negotiations with the Palestinians to seek a peaceful solution that ensures justice, safety, fairness and equality for all;

(ii) request that the Leader submits this Motion to the UK Prime Minister and Opposition Leader.

Citations:

(1)

<https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/gaza-destruction-bombing-israel-aa528542--WSJ>

(2) Flash Appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2023 | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory (ochaopt.org) -- OCHA

(3) WHO pleads for immediate reversal of Gaza evacuation order to protect health and reduce suffering – WHO

(4)

<https://www.npr.org/2024/01/21/1225883522/palestinian-death-toll-soars-past-25-000-in-gaza-with-no-end-to-war-in-sight --NPR News>

(5) Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update 39 | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory (ochaopt.org) – OCHA

(6) UN experts say Israel strikes on Gaza amount to 'collective punishment'; | Reuters –UN

- (7) *Doctors without borders | The Practical Guide to Humanitarian Law* (guide-humanitarian-law.org) – Doctors without Borders
- (8) <https://www.jpr.org.uk/reports/how-conflict-israel-and-gaza-affects-jews-uk-and-what-you-can-do-about-it> -- JPR
- (9) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-67836607> -- BBC
- (10) *The Siege of Gaza and the Starvation War Crime* (justsecurity.org) – Just Security
- (11) <https://www.offshore-technology.com/features/what-are-the-implications-of-israel-palestine-war-on-the-global-oil-and-gas-markets> -- Offshore Technology
- (12) <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/oct/18/israel-hamas-war-oil-peices-global-economy> -- The Guardian
- (13) https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/7953/Indices-of-Deprivation-headline-findings.pdf -- KCC
- (14) <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/media/news/2023/hss/how-the-israel-hamas-war-could-affect-the-world-economy-and-worsen-global-trade-tensions> -- QMUL
- (15) <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/israel-palestine-war-76-percent-britons-want-immediate-ceasefire> -- Middle East Eye
- (16) <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2023-10/ipsos-uk-polling-middle-east-october-2023.pdf> -- IPSOS
- (17) <https://www.kentlive.news/news/thanet-councillor-calls-ceasefire-gaza> - Kent Live
- (18) 18th November Margate for Palestine gathering at Margate Steps
- (19) 2nd December Thanet Marches for Palestine, Cecil Square
- (20) 7th December rally outside Council meeting/ speaker from public gallery/ Mike call for ceasefire in his response to Ricks Leader speech
- (21) 30th December vigil for Palestine in Margate, 231 Northdown Rd
- (22) 6th Jan Voices for Palestine meeting at Cliftonville CC, speakers; Dr Shahd Hammouri (Law lecturer at University of Kent), Naomi Wimborne Idrissi (Jewish Voice for Labour, although stated her Labour Party membership had been removed) & Ahmed Alnaouq (Journalist and co-founder of 'We Are Not Numbers')
- (23) Fri 26th Jan Cllr Raushan Ara's Multi-Faith Vigil for Peace speakers; Rabbi Cliff of the Thanet & District Reformed Synagogue & Carl Whitehead of the Ramsgate Salvation Army, held in Ramsgate town centre
- (24) Sat 27th Jan Day of Action - boycott rally outside Barclays in Ramsgate
- (25) Sat 27th Jan Holocaust Memorial Day service at synagogue
- (26) FEAST for PEACE at Curve Coffee Store, Margate, which has also now raised just under 8K for Gazan Civilian's and Israel/Palestinian Peace to be equally split between Doctors Without Borders and Standing Together.
- (27) 1st Feb antisemitism workshop in Cliftonville with JVL
- (28) 10th Feb, rally in Margate re boycott of McDonalds & Tesco
- (29) 22nd Feb, rally planned outside Council meeting."

2.0 Options

- 2.1 To debate the motion - please refer to paragraph 3.0
- 2.2 Not to debate the motion, in which case the motion will fall.

3.0 Decision Making Process

- 3.1 If the motion is debated, at the end of the debate a vote will be taken to agree the motion or not. As only Council can agree to this motion, if the motion falls then it will not be referred to any other committee.

Contact Officer: Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager

Reporting to: Ingrid Brown (Head of Legal and Democracy & Monitoring Officer)

Annex List

There are no annexes with this report.

Background Papers

There are no background papers with this report.

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Chris Blundell (Director of Corporate Services - Section 151)

Legal: Ingrid Brown (Head of Legal and Democracy & Monitoring Officer)